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# **THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA**

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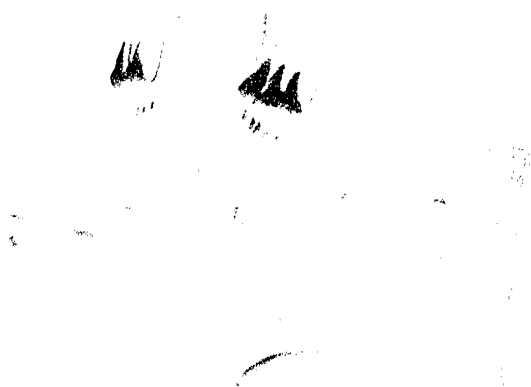
### THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN

|                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
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### IN PREPARATION

*Austria*  
*Denmark*  
*South America*  
*Mexico*  
*Ceylon*  
*Japan*  
*Turkey*





*The plant that the travellers all had to stop to to look at--Kangaroo Paws with their tube-like flowers and covering of a woolly mass of crimson, green, scarlet, or orange.*

THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN  
AUSTRALIA

KATHLEEN MONYPENNY



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PHOENIX HOUSE LONDON

OTHER BOOKS BY KATHLEEN MONYPENNY

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*From Whaling Station to Sheep Run*  
*The Kites that Flew into the Moon*  
*The Children Went Too*

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## CONTENTS

| <i>Chapter</i>                               | <i>Page</i> |
|----------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. 'It Must Be Australia!'                   | 11          |
| 2. Highway to Perth                          | 18          |
| 3. Mighty Mundaring Weir                     | 30          |
| 4. Billy-Tea in the Dandenongs               | 42          |
| 5. Looking for the Lyre-bird                 | 51          |
| 6. Meeting the MacNamaras Again              | 62          |
| 7. Ducking and Dumping in the Surf           | 70          |
| 8. Summer Schooldays in Sydney               | 78          |
| 9. Letters from Brisbane                     | 90          |
| 10. A Scorching Hot Christmas                | 97          |
| 11. In the Sheep Country                     | 108         |
| 12. Fun and Hard Work on a Sheep Station     | 117         |
| 13. Flying Foxes and an Emu Chase            | 123         |
| 14. Down the Murray River and on to Adelaide | 131         |
| 15. An Autumn Easter Holiday                 | 143         |
| Index                                        | 155         |

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The flowers of the Kangaroo Paw plant *Frontispiece*

Pages 8 & 9: Pictorial map of Australia

*Facing* 16: The Newsomes' first view of Perth

16: Melbourne seen across the River Yarra

17: Wide, tree-lined Collins Street

32: The kookaburra, or laughing jackass, split his sides

32: They were lucky enough to see the shy and beautiful lyre-bird

33: Mama Koala bear with her son on the branch of a blue-gum tree

33: Mama Kangaroo with *her* son. Australians call him a joey

64: 'Humping his bluey.' One of the 'swaggies' still found occasionally on Australian bush roads

65: Out on the Healesville Road

65: Sydney Harbour and Bridge with Pinchgut Island

80: Surfing on Manly Beach, an immense stretch of golden sand

81: A lovely bit of the Hawkesbury River

81: One of the many bridges of Brisbane, capital of the sub-tropical State of Queensland

96: The Blue Mountains, with great stretches of tree-tops waving below

97: Miles and miles of dead, ring-barked trees

***Facing* 97: A homestead, long, low, and cream-coloured,  
with a veranda all round**

**112: Huge mobs of sheep driven by men on horseback**

**112: The sheep-dog running over the backs of sheep**

**113: On Mr MacNamara's station, shearing was done by  
electricity**

**128: One of the old-time paddle-wheelers on the River  
Murray**

**128: A clever arrangement of irrigation channels**

**129: Little grapes spread out in the sun to dry**

**129: Their wide sun-hats bobbing as they move, these  
girls pick, pick, pick all day long**

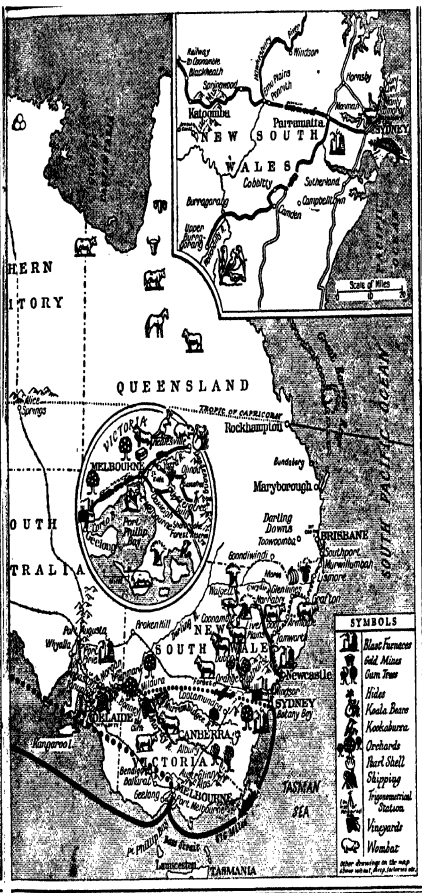
**144: In an orange grove at Renmark**

**144: One of the oldest houses in Australia**

**145: Two views of the compact little city of Adelaide**



— shows the Newsomes' main route, ... the route Mr Newsome took when he flew to Melbourne and other journeys taken by Mr and Mrs Newsome without



their family; ■ ■ ■ indicates short excursions off main route. The three insets show details of Fremantle and Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and their surroundings.



## Chapter 1

### ‘IT MUST BE AUSTRALIA!’

Peter leaned over the side of the ship, getting his head out as far as he could over the deck rails. He was thirteen, and had spent most of the morning with his friends the engineers, even wangling a visit (his first and last) to the engine-room. His sister Anne was sprawling with a book on a rug nearby. ‘Anne,’ said Peter softly. ‘Anne, look!’

Anne didn’t answer or even hear him. Peter drew his head from between the railings and stared hard out over the deep bluey-purple sea, which they had all spent so much time watching for a whole month during the long voyage—a long voyage which was to end soon, when they reached Australia. Right on the edge of the horizon, where sky and sea seemed to touch, Peter thought he could see a new dark line. There was a new smell about, too. He knew all the smells of the ship, including those of the engine-room, the galley, and the salty, tarry smell of the boat deck, but this was new. ‘Kind of scenty,’ he said to himself, remembering the pine-trees at home in Sussex.

Suddenly he gave a shout. ‘Dad! Anne! Look, Anne——’

‘Oh, Pete, keep quiet. What are you yelling at? You know they like us to keep quiet after lunch. Anybody’d think there was a whale about, and I can’t read with you fidgeting.’

Peter took no notice. ‘I say, come over here. Come and look, and then say I’m fussing. I’m not yelling, anyhow.’

‘What is it?’ said Anne, getting up. The deck sloped away suddenly as the ship met a great swell, and Anne did a glissade right across. Peter pointed a brown hand.

‘There, I thought it was. It’s getting clearer now. Look—land. Golly, it must be Australia.’

‘So there is,’ said Anne excitedly. ‘I say, Pete, it *must* be. Daddy said the next land we’d see would be Western Australia. We’re the first to see it. Come on, let’s tell them.’ And off they

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

flew, causing a sleeping passenger to wake up with a start. As they reached the far end of the deck, their father loomed up, taking a stroll with nice, tubby Mr Jellick. 'Daddy!' they called, long before they reached him.

'Hullo, what's all the excitement?' said their father as they rushed up.

'Land ho!' shouted Peter. 'I saw it first, and you can smell something different, too.'

The two men turned. Mr Jellick sniffed the air, took a good deep breath, and then another, and to everyone's surprise, another. 'You're right, Pete,' he said. 'Take a good sniff. That's right. And another. That's Australia you can smell. Gee-whiz! It's good to smell gum-trees again. I didn't think it was true that they could be smelt out at sea, but you can smell 'em all right.' He leaned on the rail.

'He's right!' Mr Newsome said, staring hard. 'I didn't think we were going to make it so early this afternoon.'

'Bang goes my ten bob,' said Mr Jellick. 'I had a bet on we'd sight land at sunset. It's only three now. Well, Anne and Pete, that's Australia, and I thought only an Australian would smell it, but you two kids beat me to it. It's the trees. A queer aromatic sort of scent they have, not like eucalyptus at all till you bite the leaf.'

'Eucalyptus!' exclaimed Anne. 'Is *that* what they are? How horrid. Fancy having eucalyptus all round you. Reminds me too much of colds at home. I don't think I'll like it.'

'Wait and see, Anne. It's not as bad as all that. It's a funny place, you know, Australia,' he went on in a teasing way, 'all upside down to you. You'll be getting an extra summer. The swans are black, the skies are blue, and it's spring when it should be autumn.'

'And the animals wear fur, swim, lay eggs, and carry their babies in pouches in front,' cut in Anne. 'We've heard it all.'

'And the crows fly backwards to keep the dust out of their eyes,' said a deep, slow voice, as a tall man joined them. The children called him Tufty, and he was their greatest friend. He had been in the R.A.A.F. but had stayed behind to study 'wogs' in England after demobilization; at least that was how he explained his bacteriology to the children, 'wogs' being germs, mites, bacteria, any kind of microbe.

## 'IT MUST BE AUSTRALIA!'

Just then Jimmy Jollick came up. He was fourteen and Peter's pal. They went off together to talk about landing and Australia all over again.

There are two other members of the group whom we haven't met; they are Michael and Helen, brother and sister, who are returning to Sydney, right on the other side of the Australian continent, after about a year's visit to England. Michael is fifteen, Helen about a year older than twelve-year-old Anne. They had become great friends during the voyage, going ashore and doing everything together. Michael shared a cabin with Peter and his father.

Next morning, when they all woke very early, they were conscious of something strange. Peter rolled over in his narrow bunk and wondered what it was. His ears felt empty, there was a strange quietness, and he could hear the breathing of Michael and the people in the other bunks much more clearly than usual. He leaned over the edge of his bunk. 'Daddy,' he whispered to his father sleeping below. 'Daddy, are we *there*?' Cautiously he wormed himself to the end of his bunk to peep through the port-hole opposite.

*The ship wasn't moving.* They had tied up at Fremantle. Instead of the steady swish and humming noise he could distinctly hear the water slapping against the sides. Michael whispered across that the engines had stopped. That was enough for Peter. He climbed quickly down his little step-ladder and made a quick getaway with his clothes and towel over his arm to the bathroom. Michael followed. They dashed in and out of the bath, not bothering too much over it, and back to the cabin, where Peter's father still lay. In a few moments he rushed out again to get on deck. It wasn't quite half-past seven in the morning. And *such* a morning! The sun was quite high and warm already, the sea a brighter blue than the purple colour of yesterday. And the sky! Peter thought he'd never seen such a bright blue sky. He noticed dark tree-tops in the distance, waving over the cranes and chimneys.

Jimmy appeared next, followed by Anne, and lastly Michael, who believed in dressing slowly. Jimmy came from Albany in Western Australia—the oldest settled part of the State, as he was careful to tell the newcomers. He had been ill, so his father thought

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

the voyage would do him good and took him with him when he went on a short business trip to England. Mr Jellick and Jimmy were both full of plans for showing the city of Perth, the capital of Western Australia, to their friends during the ship's two days in port. It was early September and springtime; Perth and the surrounding country would be at their best. Jimmy knew Perth well, as he went to boarding-school there.

'Come on up to the boat deck, Pete. We can see better up there.'

'Right-oh,' called Peter, swarming up the companionway after him.

Jimmy pointed. 'Look, see away over there? My school's there. See those tall trees sticking up? It's near there.'

Peter could see something waving in the distance.

'Those are the trees I told you about. And the wild flowers'll be out.'

'I hope there'll be some of those funny things you've been going on about—the things with a kind of wool on them that's bright red or green.'

'Oh, those. You mean kangaroo paws. There are jet-black ones, too. Yes, you'll see some. Look, there's a taxi coming up. Hey, Dad!' he called as Mr Jellick hove in sight below. 'Can we take them to Pemberton on the timber train? Michael's never seen the big timber this side, and Peter and Anne ought to.'

'No, sorry, my boy, we won't have time,' said Mr Jellick. 'But I tell you what, we're going for a drive through the orchard country out to Mundaring Weir. We've a long journey home on Sunday, unless we fly, and I've some business in Perth first. So,' as Jimmy and Peter arrived beside him, 'perhaps you could go with the others while I'm busy. I suggest that to-morrow we make a day of it, and go for the drive through the orchard country,' he added, as Mr Newsome appeared. 'On to Mundaring, lunch at the hotel there, and drive back via Gloucester Park, where I hope you'll all be my guests.'

'That's most awfully kind of you, Jellick, but aren't we too big a party—four of us, and Helen and Michael?'

Mr Jellick waved this aside. 'Not at all, not at all. Besides,

## **'IT MUST BE AUSTRALIA!'**

you're taking young Jimmy off my hands this morning. I was just telling the kids that I shall be busy until one o'clock, so that I'd better meet you after lunch. Then I'll be at your disposal till to-morrow evening to take you round. Of course you'll be my guests at Gloucester Park. Pleasure. Must show you round.'

'Well, I call that true hospitality. Of course we're very glad indeed to have someone like you to take us about. It's most kind of you,' said Mr Newsome.

'The famous hospitality we've always heard about,' said Mrs Newsome, joining them, 'especially to strangers in the land.'

'There's the breakfast gong at last,' said Mr Jellick, and they started down the companionway.

'Look at the funny sugar lumps,' said Anne as they sat down. 'All flat and square.'

'Australian sugar from Queensland. We're in Australian waters now, Anne.'

'We had a parcel last year with some in it, don't you remember? Much sweeter than the English sugar,' said their mother.

Peter wanted to know if there was much sugar grown in Australia.

'Grows all her own, and then some,' said Mr Jellick. 'Ah, oranges for breakfast.' And he passed a dish of huge golden fruit. 'We grow almost every kind of fruit in this State, but no sugar-cane. You'll be able to eat all the fruit you want when we go through the orchard country out to Mundaring to-morrow. Nectarines, peaches, and apricots won't be ripe yet—it's too early—but oranges, grapefruit, and mandarins will all be there.'

Anne wanted to know what mandarins were, and Jimmy explained that they are the little round oranges which in England are called tangerines.

'Mother,' said Peter suddenly, 'can I have some shorts like Jimmy's? Jimmy says all the boys at his school wear shorts like his, even in winter. They're made of warmer stuff then. Can we get some Australian shorts in Perth to-day?'

His mother smiled. 'We've heard all about those shorts before, and quite enough, too.'

Peter appealed to his father.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

'I could wear them straight away on the boat on the way round to Sydney. Look at Jimmy's—they're fine.'

'Yes,' agreed his father, 'they certainly are nice, and sensible too.'

'Well,' said Mrs Newsome, 'we were thinking of looking round the shops this morning, so we *might* see what we can see in the way of shorts, Peter darling, if you're very good, and don't scream in my ear, or say the word shorts again.'

'What I want most,' said his mother when Peter had gone to spread the good news about his shorts, 'is a nice cup of freshly made tea. Oh, and a shady hat each for Anne and me. Don't forget your sun-glasses, Anne dear, and be sure to remind me to take mine.'

Tufty looked up, rolling his cigarette. 'I say, what's this,' surveying them, 'all dressed up for Perth? What about me—aren't I in on this trip?'

There was a chorus of 'Oh yes, of course, Tufty, of course.'

'We thought you'd be bored, with us just shopping,' began Mrs Newsome, but Mr Jellick looked up. 'Ah, Tufty, the very man,' he said. 'Would you take charge of young Jimmy to-day? See he doesn't make a nuisance of himself or eat too much ice-cream, like a good chap? Mr and Mrs Newsome have their hands full, and I have business for the morning.'

'Like two brothers we'll be. Come on, James, attach yourself to me. I'm going to have a hair-cut this morning, anyway.'

By the time breakfast was over it was settled that the whole party should take one of the coaches waiting outside the dock gates for the twelve-mile drive to Perth, as it would cost less than having two taxis. Then Mr Jellick suggested that they might like to return to the ship in the evening by taking the ferry-boat across to South Perth and then driving back to Fremantle on the south side of the Swan.

'Come on, come on, let's get going,' said Tufty. 'I've just been arranging for the coach. We're going via Mosman, Cottesloe beach, and through King's Park.'

'That's all right for us. Anything you people suggest,' said Mr Newsome. He added that it was a relief to have kind friends to show them round and tell them the best things to do.

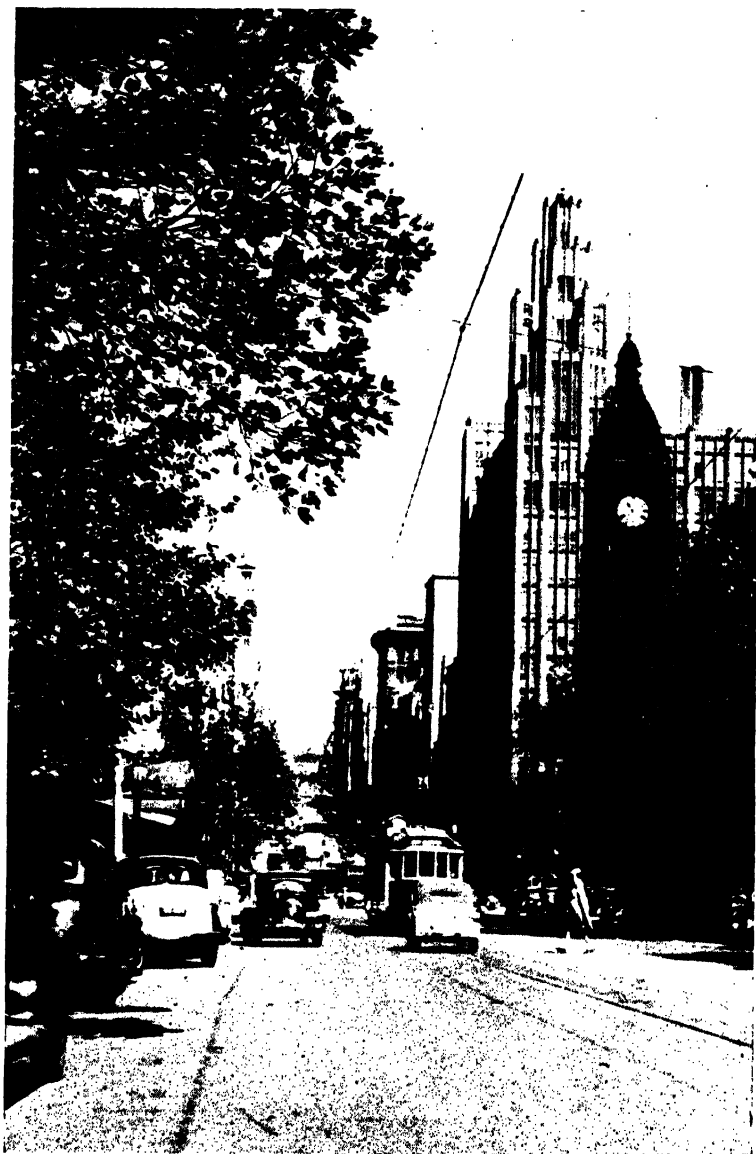


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**ABOVE:** *The Newsomes' first view of Perth, with its fringe of trees, curving in a semi-circle round the Swan River. BELOW:* Melbourne seen across the River Yarra.



*Wide, tree-lined Collins Street, with its ten- and twelve-story buildings, is one of Melbourne's most imposing thoroughfares.*

**'IT MUST BE AUSTRALIA!'**

'We'll show you round Sydney,' said Helen and Michael together. 'You're coming to stay with us some time, you know.'

Mr Jellick came up just then to say that his luggage was clear, so they all moved on, picking their way through the chains, baggage, ropes, stewards, and people to the gangway. As they climbed into the coach they saw that not only luggage but huge cases of machinery were being unloaded. Bales of wool and wheat were waiting in the wharf-sheds to go on board.

## *Chapter 2*

### HIGHWAY TO PERTH

'Now, Jellick, we're in your hands, you're the boss of this trip,' said Mr Newsome when they were all in.

'We'll go by Stirling Highway through King's Park. That'll get me into Perth soon after ten. We could meet soon after lunch, if that suits you, Mrs Newsome.'

They had left Fremantle's busy streets behind. They passed many factories, for it is a shipping and manufacturing port. They saw the ocean again after crossing North Fremantle Bridge, an ocean sparkling under the blue sky.

'I thought we'd left the sea behind,' said Anne, 'but there it is again.'

'Oh, we see water everywhere round our cities,' remarked Jimmy, who was taking a pardonable pride in showing the small, bright city to the newcomers.

'Look at the waves crashing in over there; how golden and smooth that beach looks!' exclaimed Mrs Newsome.

They all sat back lazily in the sun, and Mr Newsome drew on his pipe contentedly as they sped along. 'Here we are at Cottesloe beach. We've passed Mosman, and we'll be taking the road running round Matilda Bay next. (And I don't know who Matilda was, Peter!) Then we go through Crawley, past the University and so into Perth,' Mr Jellick told them.

'Fancy there being a Mosman here too,' said Michael. 'I s'pose they named it after Mosman in Sydney.'

'Just like a Sydneysider,' exclaimed Tufty. 'You people from the eastern States think you're the beginning and end of Australia.'

'I believe you spell your Sydney suburb Mosman, with only one "s" too, don't you? Both are named after an early settler, Alexander Mossman, with double "s," which makes it rather confusing,' said Mr Jellick.

## HIGHWAY TO PERTH

Michael laughed. 'P'raps we *do* forget about West Australia a bit over in N.S.W., but then it's so far away.'

The Newsomes noticed that Australians often spoke of New South Wales as N.S.W.; it is always written so on letters and in newspapers.

'Look, Mrs Newsome, there's the University just coming up. See that tall, square, white tower with a blue clock face?' said Mr Jellick, pointing.

'And there's the sea again,' called Jimmy from his side.

'We're going too quickly to point places out. Round Perth you'll see many gardens like these, where native flowers grow beside roses, and all kinds of English flowers,' said Mr Jellick as they passed the low houses surrounded by dark green lawns. Nearly all were one-storied.

'Now we can see the University buildings better,' said Tufty, as they came round a curve in the road. They saw in front of them a long, arched colonnade, rather Spanish-looking, a little resembling cloisters.

'I suppose you get much hotter weather than *this*, don't you, Mr Jellick?' Mrs Newsome asked a few moments later.

'Oh yes, we get it pretty hot in the west. This isn't hot, this is just nice. We often get a temperature of over ninety degrees in midsummer,' answered Mr Jellick.

'Look, Anne,' said Tufty, 'at that garden. They've got two boronias, those special native wild flowers we've told you of; the pink and the little brown one. Can't you smell something spicy and scented?'

Anne sniffed, and the driver slowed down to allow them to look more closely.

'There it is,' said Tufty. 'That low bush with tight pink buds on the bright green stem. That's only *one* kind of boronia though; there are many others.'

Helen leaned forward. 'We call that Christmas rose in New South Wales,' she said.

'Most likely,' said Tufty, pointing out the small brown boronia which has the stronger and famous scent. 'To an Australian that means spring,' he explained, 'just as your primrose does in

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

England. It's a native of Western Australia and Victoria, but it can be cultivated in most parts of the country, especially in New South Wales, where it's very popular.'

Tufty explained that in the colder parts of Victoria and New South Wales, in the New England district near Armidale, and on the Southern Alps of Victoria, as well as in Tasmania, all the English flowers one could wish for grow well: grape hyacinths, narcissus, pansies, pheasant-eyes, and, of course, violets everywhere.

'Like to get a closer view of the University?' asked the driver suddenly. 'Only free university in the British Empire.' And he drove in past the long cream cloisters, with their thick, rounded arches.

'What thick grass,' said Peter, putting his head out as they went through the gates. 'One of the boys at school told me it was too hot for lawns in Australia, the grass wouldn't grow.'

'Someone told me that the birds don't sing,' said Michael. 'They would hardly believe me when I told them about the lyre-bird, and the bell-bird; and the magpie's song. The English magpie doesn't sing at all.'

'People have the strangest ideas,' said Tufty. 'We've got beautiful lawns when we take the trouble to grow them and when there's not a shortage of water. They're mostly that thick buffalo-grass you see, but in the colder districts English grass does very well. Another legend is that the flowers have no scent, or almost none, except the wattle. However, after this morning you don't believe *that* any more, do you?'

'We certainly don't,' answered Anne and Mummy.

'What *is* wattle, really?' asked Mrs Newsome.

'It's what you call mimosa and pay *shillings* for at Christmas-time in London,' said Tufty.

By now they had reached King's Park, and almost as Tufty finished speaking they came to an avenue of wattle-trees in full flower. Further on they found some of the famous red-flowering gums, just coming into blossom. These trees are not much higher than an apple-tree, and have clusters of soft flowers of pink and deep red that fill the air with their own unmistakable scent.

'There now, those are our West Australian flowering gums,' said Mr Jellick proudly, tilting his hat back.

'And there are some primroses,' said Mrs Newsome. 'I thought you said they didn't grow here? Ah, no, they're not, I see now that we're nearer.'

'We might find some trigger flowers. They should be out by now,' said Tufty.

Here the driver broke in. 'Over one thousand acres of virgin bush in its natural state in this park,' he chanted, as though he'd learnt it by heart. 'Wild bush and flowers in original state ten minutes from the city of Perth. We passed Crawley baths back there a minute ago, largest baths in the southern hemisphere, eight acres of water, open all the year round. Youse was all that busy talking I couldn't say me piece. I was fair bursting.'

Now they ran through wild bushland, where there were more flowering trees. There was one crowded with creamy-white flowers which they all especially admired, and which Bill said was a wild cauliflower! Then appeared the lovely Geraldton waxflower, a heathy-looking shrub.

It would be impossible to describe all the flowers they saw, but the predominant shade was blue. The one they all had to get out and look at was the kangaroo paw. It didn't look real, and as Tufty remarked, no kangaroo ever had a green or a crimson paw! The flowers look like small tubes on the end of a reed. Flower and stem are covered thickly with a kind of wool—crimson or vivid green, yellow, scarlet, orange. The weirdest of all was black. Its tube-like flower was yellow, but you could see this only if you peered inside, as it was covered with thick inky-black wool. 'They aren't like flowers at all,' said Anne.

'Ah, but here are some,' called Michael and Tufty. 'Here's the brown boronia, and the little trigger flower.'

Michael said he'd seen the trigger flower in the bush round Sydney. Tufty found them a pitcher-plant too, with a leaf rolled up like a little jug with its lid on. 'Once an insect goes inside,' he told them, 'snap! the lid shuts, and the creature can't get out. Then the insect dies and helps to feed the plant,' he added. 'But this isn't a natural-history lesson.'

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Now they drove through a bush road carpeted with flowers of all shades, patterned by the pointed leaves of gum-trees, and flowers strange and beautiful and queer, which made them realize that they were indeed at the other end of the world. They chewed some gum-leaves, and found them very eucalyptusy. There were yellow and red bottle-brushes, banksias, and the blue leschenaultia, for which no one has found a pet name.

At last they reached Mount Eliza, where they all got out once more to look at the view of the city, which, fringed by trees, curved round the semi-circle of the Swan River. They could see white and brick-red buildings across the bright waters, and in the background twenty or thirty miles away were the hills of the Darling Ranges, a clear, deep blue. A sudden fall of birdsong, running in semitones to a minor key, added to the strange spell, and Tufty held up a warning finger as a black and white magpie pirouetted on a branch and gave his call again.

As they walked back to the coach Tufty and Helen explained that in Australia the magpie's song is the sign of spring, just as the first song of the thrush is a sign of spring to many people in England.

A little awed by their first glimpse of vast distances in the new land, Anne and Peter climbed quietly into the coach, but were soon chattering away like cockatoos on a wire fence, as Mr Jellick put it. Trolleybuses and electric trams went clanging by. Peter and Anne were a little surprised at this as well as at the parks and green lawns they still kept passing. Mr Jellick told them that they were bowling greens and tennis courts. 'Very English, you see,' he said. 'And on Christmas Day, with the temperature at nearly 100, people still eat boiling-hot Christmas pudding.'

'Well, it's not exactly cold now, is it?' said Peter; 'it's more like a warm summer's day. I'm getting hotter every minute.'

'Ah,' said the Australians all together, 'isn't it marvellous to feel warm again?' And they leaned back, with satisfaction all over their faces.

'A lot of salamanders, that's what you are,' said Mrs Newsome.

As they drove through the streets they noticed how low all

the buildings seemed. 'Skyscrapers are banned,' Mr Jellick explained.

'Oh, Mummy, look at all the roofs right over the street. Look, all the shops seem to have them. How nice for a wet day,' said Anne, with her eyes glued to the window.

Jimmy, Michael, and Helen were at pains to explain that these delightful and solid roofs which projected over the streets from the big shops were to shelter you from the heat and sun of midsummer, even more than from the wet, though they served both purposes. 'We have them in all the towns where there are shops,' they said. 'Big shops in country towns have them too, and so do most country pubs—with veranda posts.'

'They'd be grand in London,' said Mrs Newsome, looking up as they walked into Boan's, where they were to have morning tea and do some shopping.

'Come on, here's the lift, this way,' said Jimmy coming up. He'd been ahead like a terrier, finding things out. They waited for the rest of the party.

'Well,' Mr Newsome was saying, 'Tufty and I are going to have a shave and hair-cut. We'll take the boys—Peter, you look like a walking mop. Come along.' And he began to stride off.

'Meet you on the roof-garden for tea in an hour,' said Mrs Newsome.

Mrs Newsome went off to make an appointment for a quick hair-do and shampoo for the two girls, and then they looked at all the bright cotton, linen, and silk frocks.

When they reached the roof garden on the fourth floor, they found the others waiting for them at two tables near the sliding windows banked with hydrangeas. From here they had another view of the city and the river shining below.

They had what the waitress called morning tea, but the delicious toast and butter, walnut loaf with dates, creamy cakes flavoured with orange and banana with passion-fruit icing spread thickly over the top, and best of all the hot fresh tea were, as Mrs Newsome remarked, more like the fare for a party at five in the afternoon! Tufty certainly seemed to be in league with the waitress over the cakes.

When Peter and Jimmy had wiped the remains of their fourth

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

piece of cake from their fingers, their father remarked that they'd better go and have a wash. 'That is, if you can move,' he said.

'And now for our dresses, Mummy,' said Anne as they parted at the lift doors.

Two hours later they all met again for lunch. Anne was very excited over her new frock, while Peter was actually wearing his shorts. Anne undid the wrappings of the brightly striped box in which her frock had been put. 'Look, Daddy! Look, Tufty! See the little coloured fish all over it?'

And she shook it out, for them to see the pattern of sea-anemones, multicoloured fish, and small pink shells. They both admired it very much, and Tufty assured her that he'd never seen anything so beautiful. 'Along the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland amongst the bright coral and the strangely-coloured sea-anemones, there really are tiny fish wearing the latest thing in stripes; in plain blue or yellow, with accordion pleated fins of different colours,' he told her. 'We might see some sea-anemones this afternoon if we go to the beach. It really *is* a fascinating frock, isn't it, Mrs Newsome?'

'I couldn't resist it,' said Anne's mother, smiling, 'and it wasn't really expensive. I found a very pretty one for myself, too.'

Then they had to admire Peter's shorts, and Anne had to tell them about her white drill playsuit, 'that you button up all the way down the front with enormous red buttons.'

'That really was cheap,' said her mother, 'beautifully pleated and cut. I bought a beach frock for myself too; the shop-girl was so nice. She advised me against blue, as it's a bad colour for fading here. Well, I must be going for that hairdressing appointment. See you all at three.'

The rest of the party went for a drive round the beaches, where they got out and watched the breakers crashing onto the sand. Tufty said he wouldn't advise them to go in, even if they had their bathers with them, as September is rather early. 'We'd think it cold, though perhaps you hardy English, used to icy water, would probably like it.' Instead they took a bus round Stirling Gardens out to Como and back, and finally to their rendezvous with Mrs Newsome. Here Mr Jellick, whom they

## HIGHWAY TO PERTH

had also picked up, said he had a little surprise for them, and bundled them all into a big taxi.

'I've arranged with a friend of mine who is a member to take you all to early afternoon tea at the Royal Yacht Club. The terrace is nice at this time of year, and as the Michaelmas holidays are on, we'll be sure to see some children canoeing on the river.'

'Gee-whiz,' said Peter, 'canoeing! Lead me to it.' He imagined himself shooting rapids with a paddle in one hand and a boomerang in the other.

Mr Jellick laughed. 'Boys and girls all seem to enjoy the water,' he said. 'Nothing sensational, of course, just paddling about, rowing, and falling out, and getting in.'

Peter's face fell. 'No waterfalls or rapids?'

'Not round here, I'm afraid, Peter. Here we are at Melville Water, really part of the Swan River.' They turned in at the gates. 'There are the dinghies and canoes. See all the kids splashing about? At the height of the season yacht sails are thick round here, but it's too early yet, so there are only one or two. Look, there's one tacking.'

From the green lawn which sloped down to the water's edge they watched a small passenger boat dodging and hooting at two small boys in a canoe who came in on her right, whilst two yachts missed crossing her bows by a hair's breadth. Peter and Anne stood watching the river, glad of a few moments of quiet. Black swans, curving their long necks, went gliding by, their ruffy black feathers and coral beaks reflected in the glassy water close inshore beneath the pale green of weeping willows and trees. White swans also sailed proudly and smoothly by. A cormorant sat on a rock to fish, diving like a stone and always returning with a small shiny body in his beak; a wattle-tree in flower on the lawn filled the air with scent. They moved on to the sparse shade of a red gum-tree, and looked in surprise at the splashes of colour in the ragged bark. Presently shouts and laughter from boys and girls in their canoes mingled with the cries of birds and the cooing of pigeons and doves, and—ah!—Anne saw it, a bright parrot flashed among the flowering trees and was gone.

The parrot woke the little party from the silence into which

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

they had fallen. Tufty took them down the path. He showed them the busy streams of ants—minute red ones, small black ones, larger greenheads—running in regular two-way traffic lines. All are fond of sugar or cake crumbs. If you dropped any, they would be smothered in a few minutes. The larger glossy bottle-green ones, the red soldier and bull-ants, must be left severely alone, for their bite can be not only painful but dangerous. 'Never sit or stand on their nests or stir them up with a stick,' Tufty said with a twinkle. 'Ah, here's what I was after, Jimmy. Look! a trap-door. What luck! right in the middle of the path.'

'Here's a twig,' said Jimmy eagerly, seeming to know exactly what Tufty wanted. The others stood round and watched while very carefully he lifted a hinged lid that looked like a tiny piece of tortoise-shell or a scrap of bark.

'Gently, gently,' said Tufty, stooping low as a neat round hole in the ground appeared. 'Now wait.' Eyes popping, they all stooped to watch. After what seemed an age a tiny hairy arm stretched up and pulled the door shut. Carefully, with his long twig, Jimmy opened it again, and again the little arm came out and pulled the door to. 'Isn't he cute?' he said, absorbed.

'What is he?' asked Anne as Jimmy opened the door again.

'He's a trap-door spider,' said Tufty. 'He certainly won't chase you and as long as you don't try opening the door with your nail but use a fairly long twig, you're safe. All the same, he can give a very nasty bite. It's not fatal, but it's poisonous.'

'Let me have a go,' said Peter, taking the twig from Jimmy, and they watched, fascinated, while the little door was closed again. This time a beady pin's-head of a black eye could be seen as the arm emerged.

'Ugh,' said Anne, shuddering. 'Come on, there's tea.'

'All the same he's very clever, isn't he?' said Peter.

'Yes,' said Tufty, 'and he waits just inside that open door when he's hungry, dashes out, catches his dinner, and pushes it down the hole.'

'I think the little hinged lid is the best part,' said Anne.

After tea they were taken over the club's boat-house and saw the yachts laid up, the sails folded away, the members' dressing-rooms and showers. Mr Jellick had planned a run out to the

## HIGHWAY TO PERTH

West Australian National Park, and so they reluctantly left the Yacht Club with its moving panorama of the river. These national parks are to be seen in every State of Australia. Some are natural reserves of bushlands, some bird and animal sanctuaries.

'Now then, get in you two,' said Mr Jellick, bustling Peter and Jimmy in front together, where they both asked Bill the driver to let them 'have a go' at driving later.

Bill emphatically refused. 'You'd see a parrot or a rabbit and we'd be up a gum-tree in no time.'

As they settled themselves in the car, Mrs Newsome remarked that Australians seemed to be extremely energetic.

'I expect when we've had a few months of this sunshine and fruit we'll be bouncing about, too,' said her husband.

'But don't forget that our heat can be very trying,' said Tufty. 'Our summer makes many people absolutely limp, especially the damp heat. But there are many different climates in Australia.'

'Of course. It's a continent, after all.'

'Yes, but as one of our geologists, Charles Fenner, has pointed out, it's not only the smallest of the continents but it's the driest, flattest and, in some parts, the lowest of all land areas. The cold hard facts are that great tracts of Australia can never be thickly populated because the climate is too dry and, in parts, the soil too poor. Also it is becoming eroded. Of course at present there's still plenty of room for thousands of willing workers.'

'What's "eroded"?' asked Anne.

'Well, without giving you a school lecture, it means roughly that the soil, especially the valuable top and subsoil, has blown away because there's not enough moisture or roots to hold it together. The erosion in New South Wales and Victoria became very serious recently, partly because the early settlers destroyed so many trees. You'll hear a lot more about erosion during your stay in Australia.'

'Yes,' chimed in Mr Jellick, 'you're seeing West Australia at the best time of year, when the spring flowers are out. But you wait a bit till January or February. Then the prevailing colour is the brown of burnt grass.'

They were well outside the suburbs now, on a wide dusty road bordered with tall gum-greens. Soon they left these and went

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

across a plain starred with masses of flowers of all colours; the spikes of the black-boy palm could be seen sticking up amongst them.

'When are we coming to the fields?' asked Anne, remembering the tidy little fields at home bordered with hedges or stone walls that from a height looked like a patchwork quilt.

'We're not coming to the fields, because there aren't any like the ones you know. We'll pass a few orchards presently. See that post-and-rail fence over in the distance? That's the nearest we get to a hedge in the west,' explained Mr Jellick.

'We call our fields paddocks,' said Jimmy.

'They're far bigger than the English ones, too,' added Tufty. 'You could get lost in some.'

'Oh dear,' said Anne, 'everything is different, isn't it, and yet it's the same somehow. You do have cows, anyway,' as they passed a fence where some cattle had roamed up to gaze bovinely at them.

'And look,' said her mother as they came to the open country again, 'there are some primroses, I do believe.' A sheet of pale yellow flowers came into view, starred with blue.

'Couldn't we get out and pick some?' said Anne.

But, alas, they were wrong again. Tufty had to tell them that the flowers weren't primroses at all, but a West Australian spring flower, while the blue was probably the lovely native *leschenaultia*. And that anyway picking flowers along this highway was strictly forbidden by law, heavy fines being imposed on those who did it. Many native flowers and shrubs had been in danger of dying out until these very strict laws were made, because people would take too many, tearing them up by the roots. In fact, Mr Jellick said, the law particularly referred to the very road they were now on as well as to the National Park and all reserves. 'Wild flowers on private property mustn't be picked without written permission from the owner.'

At the entrance to the park they stopped a moment to read the notice about wild flowers, before going on up the long road which looked exactly like the bush. It had no lawns or set flower-beds or anything like that, as Peter remarked. The road wound round gullies and over small bridges above little streams thickly

## HIGHWAY TO PERTH

girdled with bushes and flowers. The tree they would remember best, Michael thought, was the black-boy palm. Its bushy top of spiky dark leaves looks, from a distance, for all the world like a black fellow's mop of hair done up for a dance, and that's just why it's called a black-boy!

Mr Jellick allowed them to stretch their legs on a hill from which they could look down on the shining river far below; the road, which was bordered with trees, winding like a fat snake through the massed flowers and distant blue. Mrs Newsome said that it reminded her of a vista in some old Italian painting with the road leading the eye to the distant city. 'And how clear the atmosphere is—the city is sixteen miles away and we can see it from here, shining in the sun,' she added.

Peter and Jimmy wandered off on their own, looking for 'tracks' or any excitement.

'I say, what a place for a treasure hunt—or anything,' said Peter in a low voice.

Jimmy had no sooner agreed than,—'something moved', he whispered, and they both 'froze' where they stood. They distinctly heard a rustle and a flurry among the bark and leaves, behind a banksia. Next minute a small creature with a head like a tiny hornless deer's bounded out on its hindlegs. Peter just had time to see that it had little black paws like hands dangling in front before, in one bound, it was lost to sight among the rocks. They rushed back to tell the others. 'We've seen a wallaby,' Jimmy called out, but of course when they came up it had gone.

It was getting late—after five o'clock—so they had a quick drive back, dropping Jimmy and Mr Jellick at their Perth hotel on the way. They were all tired and no one complained at the idea of having an early night and a good long sleep.

## Chapter 3

### MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

Next morning they were ready for another early start, for this was to be the day of the visit to Mundaring Weir, and soon after nine they were once again on their way through Fremantle's busy streets. First they looked at the tall silos near the wharves. Silos are buildings in which wheat is stored before being loaded into ships or trains. They saw the great cranes for lifting cases of fruit, bags of flour, hides, and all kinds of things, including pearl-shell from the far north of the State.

'What do they use the shell for?' asked Peter.

'To make buttons with,' said Tufty. 'Real pearls, as well as the button pearl-shell, come from the tropical seas round distant Broome in the north. It's the headquarters of the pearling industry.'

This time they took a different route into Perth, past the Zoo, where Tufty told them they could go and have a hot bath at any time for a few pence.

'A hot bath!' exclaimed Peter and Michael together. 'Why go to the Zoo for a bath?'

Tufty grinned. 'Ah, I thought that would trick you. They're natural mineral baths, so when you're old and crippled with rheumatism you can come to Perth and go to the Zoo for a cure!'

'Well, stone the crows,' said Peter.

'*What!*' exclaimed Mrs Newsome.

Tufty laughed. 'That's a perfectly harmless bit of Australian slang. And when we want to say that everything is O.K. or that everything in the garden is lovely, you'll hear "He's on the sheep's back", sheep, so far, being our main source of wealth.'

'You won't stop them picking up these expressions, you know, so we may as well make the best of it. Some are very vivid,' said Mr Newsome.

'We've got some hot mineral springs at Moree, in the north

## MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

of N.S.W.,’ said Michael, when he could get in a word. He was determined that his part of the country should not be outdone by Perth.

They had been driving alongside the Zoo and now turned in for a closer view. They caught a glimpse of bright flamingoes bending over a pool, and some tall grey birds stepping delicately on the slenderest of legs. These, Tufty explained, were broilgas, or native companions as the early settlers in N.S.W. named them.

‘Like some of our other native birds, they dance, though it’s only on the plains that you can see them doing it. It’s rare now, in any case. They dance in groups, bowing, advancing, and retreating from each other almost like dancers in a quadrille. The natives have a legend about it. If ever you get hold of a book called *Dot and the Kangaroo* you’ll find a description of the native companions’ dance and lots of other interesting things. It’s about a little girl who was lost, and was looked after by a kangaroo. I’m sure you’d love it, Anne,’ adding ‘it’s an old book, though, and very hard to buy now. My mother always used to say that it is the Australian *Alice in Wonderland*. I wouldn’t go as far as that, though the animals in it are very witty.’

But who cared about books that day! They reached the hotel after threading their way through the maze of trams, cars, trolleybuses, and people about at that hour. Jimmy was on the look-out for them, and came sliding down the banisters to the front steps. Mr Jellick beamed at them from under his wide-brimmed felt hat. ‘Morning, everyone. Are we all set? Morning, Bill.’ He squeezed himself in, whilst Jimmy and Peter got together where they could talk in comfort.

In reply to some questions, Mr Jellick told them that Perth was first settled in 1829 by a Captain Stirling, and Albany, where he lived, in 1827. Actually, the British flag was hoisted by Captain Charles Fremantle of H.M.S. *Challenger* in May 1829, and Stirling arrived a month later. ‘But I suppose you’ve learnt all that at school. And you’ll have read about William Dampier, who anchored in Cygnet Bay in 1688—swans again, you see.’

‘I always like one of Dampier’s remarks in his journal,’ said

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Mr Newsome. 'He says that on the north coasts of this country he found the most impudent little black flies he had ever encountered. I notice they're still much the same here.' And he pointed to the driver's back, which was covered with them. Whenever they stopped, the flies were there in clouds.

'Oh, look!' cried Anne, as they rounded a bend. Before them among the gum-trees stretched acres of everlastings, stiff and shiny in the sun, red, yellow, orange, and pink. They looked as though they had been lacquered. The young people were allowed to get out and pick some and Anne found that they rustled together like stiff paper in the breeze.

Now the country changed. A black crow flew overhead, cawing raucously. They saw cattle under the shade of the ragged gums, which to their English eyes didn't seem very shady. Then came orchards full of pink and white blossom and tender green, bright against the dark gum-trees. In the orchards, instead of grass growing between gnarled trees, or pigs rooting among them, the ground was ploughed, and the trees stood in straight lines like regiments of soldiers. As they drove on there came a strong sweet perfume on the warm air, and there stood the orange-trees, golden fruit and white blossom together, shining among the dark leaves.

'Oh, *look!*' exclaimed Anne and Peter with one voice. 'Acres of them!' They turned in at the orchard gates and passed sheds full of fruit and wooden cases.

The owner came out, and as soon as he knew it was their first sight of real oranges growing, he drawled, 'Go ahead, kids; go on down the orchard and pick all you want, only don't break the branches. Twist the fruit off the stem, like this, see?' He walked over to a tree and showed them how to do it. 'Off you go.'

'Pick them ourselves?' said Anne and Peter together. 'Do you mean we can take them ourselves, really?'

'Yes. Go on. Only mind you don't prick yourselves.' They needed no second invitation; the whole five of them scattered like magic. 'Gee-whiz, look at the size of them,' was the last his parents heard of Peter.

The grown-ups followed more slowly, and were shown the



*The kookaburra or laughing jack-ass split his sides when he came across the Newsomes picnicking in the bush.*

*Agent-General for New South Wales.*



*They were also lucky enough to see the shy and beautiful lyre-bird*

*Australian News & Information Bureau.*

*Mama Koala Bear with her  
son on the branch of a blue-gum  
tree (they feed on its leaves)*



*Mama Kangaroo with her son.  
Australians call him a joey.*

## MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

peach, quince, and apricot-trees in blossom and, of course, had two or three oranges each. Shouts of glee came from the advance party who by now were standing on some upturned cases to pick the better. Everyone was busy peeling oranges and trying not to squirt juice over everyone else. 'I say, there's lots of juice in the skins, too. Hey, look out, Anne, that's gone in my eye.'

'How lovely the scent of fruit and blossom is together. I didn't know it was possible,' said Mrs. Newsome.

'Oh, yes, it happens sometimes with some varieties. A lot depends on the weather, and if we have frosts. Orange-trees are evergreen, you know, of course. Next year I hope to have a good crop of grapefruit and shaddocks near the lemons over there. Come and I'll give you some.' And the owner took them over and picked a couple of dozen sweet-scented lemons from the trees.

'How long have you been here?' Mr Newsome inquired.

'Just over twenty-five years. We've had our ups and downs, you know, good seasons, droughts, fires. One time a bush fire came right up and burned down the long fence over there and a lot of the trees just as they were coming into fruit. That was a heartbreak. The wind turned suddenly or we might 'a' been burnt out or lost many more trees.

Peter came up, nursing an enormous orange. 'Some of them have no seeds, Mummy, and some are blood-oranges. The man down there says there are some oranges that are ripe when they're green. I'm going to stay in Australia and grow oranges and other fruit.'

Big Tom laughed. 'You'll have to be prepared for a lot of hard work, sonny. Ups and downs. Build your own sheds. We began with that weatherboard place over there. I use it for a shed now. There wasn't anything here at all when we came—rather like the bush round the weir, only taller. We had to fell and clear it all first.'

'You dug up all the flowers, I suppose,' Anne said.

'Flowers, yes, so thick you could walk on them in the spring sometimes. It was a shame, but it had to be. We grow them now in the garden, look—wild blue daisies and everlasting and watsonias, roses, lilies, all sorts. We grow a lot of bushflowers, too.'

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

They could have stayed there listening all day, but it was time to move on. A case of oranges which Mr Jellick bought was stowed in the car at the back, with oranges and lemons for the travellers. Tom refused any payment for the fruit they had eaten in the orchard.

Soon they were spinning along in the bush again, towards the blue ranges. Beside the road there were more and more flowers of a peculiar deep brilliance.

'They've a terribly long name,' said Tufty. 'No one seems to have given them a pet one. They're *leschenaultias*—remember them at King's Park yesterday?' The driver pulled up.

It was indeed a marvellous sight. The intense blue lay like a thick carpet spread out beneath the sky, starred here and there with creamy flowers that looked, as Anne said, like white velvet daisies. These, Michael and Helen told them, were flannel flowers. The dull name was a great disappointment to Anne. There were little white spider orchids, too. The party sprawled under a tall gum-tree and were enjoying the sight when they heard what sounded like a wheezy old man cackling near by, but before anyone had time to speak there came a cascade of five or six clear notes rising and falling on the silent air. They all stayed very still, and again they came. Presently a black and white magpie appeared not far off. Lifting his head he sang his short song twice more, ending on a minor note, and then flew off on to a branch.

'The magpie again. He's the herald of spring here,' began Tufty, but before he had finished speaking there came a raucous cackle. Hoo-hoo, ha-ha-ha-ooo-ooo, aaaa-aa—on and on, into gales of laughter.

'What on *earth* is it?' Anne's brown eyes had got larger and larger.

'It's all right, Anne,' said Tufty, while Michael told her to look up into the tree.

'That's only our dear old laughing jackass, or kookaburra,' said Mr Jellick. 'Look at him there, splitting his sides at us.'

There sat the jackass, looking like an outsize in grey kingfishers, to whose family he belongs. He wasn't a bit afraid, and he flew to a branch opposite, where he could get a better view

## MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

of the party. This seemed to amuse him all the more, for he opened his beak wide and went off into wheezy chuckles again, finally hooting with laughter, in which they couldn't help joining.

'I bet he knows you've just arrived,' said Bill the driver, coming up. 'Look, there's his mate. May be a nest near by.'

Mrs Kookaburra now sat beside her spouse. Together they had another fit. The magpie flew off, no doubt in disgust, since no one could hear his delicate song with those two about.

As the party got back into the car, the cackling ceased, and the magpie's clear warble fell like a benediction upon the blue flowers waving in the breeze. Soon they had left the orchards and orange groves behind and were climbing a road that ran through what Mr Jellick called 'the real bush'.

'D'you think we'll see any kangaroos and wallabies?' asked Peter.

'No, I'm afraid the car will frighten them all away,' answered Tufty. 'But look, quick! There's a parrot—hear him scream?'

'Oh, green and blue. Wasn't he *bright*!' said Anne. 'Look, there's a white one.'

'A lemon-crested cockatoo,' said Bill the driver. 'The chap that talks.'

'I think we've got time to take you round to the Serpentine Falls,' said Mr Jellick suddenly. 'We can get to Mundaring at half-past one, or a bit later for lunch. What do you think, Tufty?'

'I think we can do it. Let's go.'

So the big car swung round in a slightly different direction and after a few more miles of winding they could hear a distant roar.

'Wet winter,' said Bill. 'Plenty of water in her this time of year. Better get out here and walk, sir.'

The sound increased to a steady thunder as they climbed the path among rough boulders and tufted grass. And then they stood above the waterfall which fell in a wide cascade of foam and spray, to be joined by another fall meeting it at right angles. It was a wild and lonely spot. The strange shapes of the great boulders on the sloping hillside, the dark green trees, the bright sun, and the turmoil of the water below made them draw back

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

in awe. It was no use trying to speak, for the sound of the waters drowned every other noise. Peter watched his mother's lips moving, but could hear nothing. Birds flew by, but their songs and calls could not be heard. They watched the mighty fall for some minutes, and then went carefully and slowly back to the car. Soon they reached the hotel at Mundaring Weir for lunch.

'Next time you come to the West, you ought to try to see Pinjarra, the Fairbridge Farm School, about fifty miles off,' remarked Mr Jellick, as he led the way in.

'What about schools and lessons for children on these isolated farms and orchards?' asked Mrs Newsome.

They told her that there are bush schools for smaller communities, as well as a very good system of lessons by correspondence course—both run by the State.

'The Western Australian correspondence courses are supposed to be especially good,' added Mr Jellick, 'and, of course, it's compulsory for every child either to go to school or to have this tuition by post. The children work very hard at it, and many do well.'

After lunch they walked round the waterworks and the reservoir, saw the State pine forest plantation, and at different points watched the torrent of water falling over the great weir.

The overseer took them to see the main pumping station, where he explained that the water they now saw being sucked into the great pipes was to be sent 350 miles to the goldfields by pipe-line, all the way to the towns of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.

'Does it keep running for 350 miles? How fast does it go?' asked Jimmy and Peter together.

'Does it go on its own impetus?' asked Michael. 'I suppose you have works along the pipe-line because the plain country's so flat.'

'Yes, that's it,' answered the overseer, and added that there are several pumping stations along the line, and that the water they were watching now would probably arrive at Kalgoorlie in a month's time!

'Gee-whiz stonethecrows,' said Peter all in one breath. 'But

## MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

why do they have to pump the water so far—can't they dig some wells?"

'They *could*,' drawled the overseer rather drily, 'but there's one snag. If there was any water, they could, but there isn't. There's no water at all.' He took them into his office and showed them a map. 'Here's Kalgoorlie—375 miles away. Until the water was piped there, they had no gardens, no vegetables could grow, and water cost more than beer. Now 11,000 people live there, the town has parks, private gardens, a swimming-pool, and so on—it's a city on the edge of the desert.'

'When was the pipe-line built? Has it been going long?'

'Since 1903. We also supply the other two nearby towns of Boulder and Coolgardie. Coolgardie's not a patch on Kalgoorlie; nearly deserted. Likely to stay so, too, unless there's a big find again.'

For the rest of the afternoon they wandered about in the warm sun, or lay under the trees, chewing gum-leaves and listening to the roar of the weir. 'Yes,' said Tufty lazily from under the brim of his hat tilted over his eyes, 'you and Anne will have to stay and swell the numbers here, Pete. It's an alarming thought that Western Australia is as big as England, France, Germany, Italy and Poland put together, nearly 976 thousand square miles, in fact.' But they were too drowsy to talk and the sun sent them to sleep, so that it was beginning to set before they stretched and roused themselves for the drive back.

Mr Jellick and Jimmy were making an early start for Albany next morning, and so at the hotel good-byes were said, with a hearty invitation from Mr Jellick to 'be sure and look us up if you are over in the west any time.' Peter and Jimmy were sorry to see the last of each other, but the ship was due to sail that night; they felt as Anne did, that it was like coming home as the side of the great vessel loomed above them on the wharf.

When they got on board, Mr Newsome found a wire asking him to fly to Melbourne next day; a seat had been booked for him on the plane from Guildford, the airport. What a bustle there was getting him off and saying good-bye! Since they were following by sea, Anne and Peter were allowed to stay up till the ship sailed so as to see the last of him waving from the wharf as they

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

slid slowly away and out to sea under the bright stars. Mr Newsome was to reach Melbourne the next afternoon, taking eight hours; by ship they would take ten days.

The ten days' voyage from Fremantle to Melbourne round the long southern coastline was uneventful. The ship was not stopping at Adelaide, the capital of the State of South Australia—though they passed St Vincent's Gulf and Kangaroo Island after leaving the Great Australian Bight. Tufty told them that there were some of Australia's best vineyards not far from Adelaide, where fine wines were made.

None of them really enjoyed the Bight except Michael, and no one felt inclined to settle down as they had on the long stretch from Colombo across the Indian Ocean. People were keyed up. Some passengers were getting off at Melbourne, others, like our party, were going on to Sydney. Michael and Helen especially were counting the hours and days with growing excitement, for they were to stay with relations at Melbourne for a few nights. Mr MacNamara owned a property, or a station as the larger sheep-runs are called in Australia, in the north-west of N.S.W. The family had a small house at Balmoral, one of the northern seaside suburbs of Sydney, on the heights, and here they usually spent the summer and part of the Easter term. They had invited Mrs Newsome, Peter, and Anne to spend a fortnight with them on their arrival in Sydney, for houses and flats were still difficult to find.

The Bight is notorious for its rough weather, and though it hadn't been really bad this trip, there had been a heavy land swell and a strong wind that rolled the ship in a highly objectionable way, so that even Peter had felt disinclined to go and gossip with his friend the steward in the pantry, listening to stories of other voyages. But they all cheered up when the wind dropped, and during one of these fresh sunny afternoons when the sea was tipped with white horses, Peter found a sheltered spot on deck and composed himself to write to Jimmy. Along came Tufty, Helen, and Anne, however, and the three young people found themselves listening to Australian native legends until tea-time.

Tufty told them the story of how the frost came to earth, the legend of why the brolgas or native companions dance, why the

## MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

blacks call certain mushrooms and luminous fungi the bread of ghosts, and other tales. They heard about hot Christmas nights spent rowing on Middle Harbour in Sydney by the light of the moon and of singing old carols or playing Christmas music on the gramophone, while the phosphorescence dripped in silver streams from the oars and the boat left a shining path in the luminous water.

At last they reached Melbourne. Early one morning they steamed slowly up Port Phillip Bay to Port Melbourne, about two miles south of the city proper, where the large vessels berth. It was half-past seven as they tied up, and Peter and Anne with Helen and Michael were well in front of the crowd at the deck rails. At last they were all down the gangway. Mr Newsome and Helen's uncle and aunt had been found, and hugged and kissed, and everyone went their ways.

Tufty announced that his first port of call would be Melbourne University, and he was then going to stay with relatives, so he would be out of things for the next few days. Michael and Helen were to stay with the uncle and aunt who had come up from Gippsland to meet them.

As Mr Newsome took his wife's arm and clutched Anne's warm little hand, the question arose, 'Where are we going, Daddy, and what are we going to do next?'

'Well,' said Mr Newsome as he drove Peter before him to the taxi, 'Melbourne is a city as large and modern as you're likely to find in most parts of the world, and the fourth oldest capital city in Australia. So I thought we'd take a quick run round part of it, go to my hotel where we're all staying whilst the ship is in port, have morning tea, and then at about eleven go off for a picnic in the bush for the day. How's that?'

Mrs Newsome laughed. 'You have it all taped, I see.'

'Yes, I had to engage the car yesterday for the run out to the Dandenong Ranges, at the Government Tourist bureau. It's about thirty miles off and we'll have a bush picnic with billy-tea, all to ourselves.'

'Dandenong, Dandenong,' murmured Anne to herself to get used to the sound. 'It's a nice word, isn't it, Mummy?' Her father went on to say that he thought it more interesting for

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

them to see something of the country outside Melbourne rather than to stay in the city, even if they saw only a little. 'It's outside the cities that we'll see the real Australia, in spite of the fact that far more people live in the capital cities than in the country. A pity, I think. Lop-sided.'

They stayed at the hotel long enough to leave their hand-luggage and have a wash before they went down in the lift to find their father in the hall, discussing picnic-baskets and a mysterious-looking brown-paper parcel with the girl at the desk. In a few minutes they were outside in the street. He took them through a white stone arcade, bright in the sun, with cool black shadows inside.

'Another arcade,' remarked Mrs Newsome. 'They seem to be quite a feature of Australian cities, don't they? Do you remember the delightful ones in Perth? I find I have quite an affection for dear, clean little Perth.'

'Yes, Perth is gay and shining, rather like some small Continental resort on the Mediterranean coast,' agreed their father. 'These arcades certainly add to the effect, don't they?'

'They're shady from the sun or shelters if a storm should come up,' remarked Peter thoughtfully.

'Mmm! Storms. I should think they do. We had a terrific thunderstorm the day I arrived. Here we are.'

Peter and Anne had been flattening their noses against some particularly enjoyable shop-windows when they were called by their father. They enjoyed their apricot milk-shakes and sandwiches with a cream cake or two, and were soon back at the hotel, where they were introduced to George the driver and helped him to stow away the picnic-baskets and fruit in the back of the car. Mr Newsome told them that George was an expert at making a fire and billy-tea in the bush. Anne wanted to know what 'billy-tea' was.

'Well, I haven't had time to taste it yet,' said her father, 'but it's made in the billy-can there, over an open fire of gum-leaves and sticks.'

'I say, is that the billy? We're going to have a wizard time, aren't we!' exclaimed Peter, jumping about.

## MIGHTY MUNDARING WEIR

'We are, my son,' said his father. 'I bought that thing specially, though I'm told that anything will do for a billy—a seven-pound golden-syrup tin, any little trifle like that, as long as it has a handle and a lid, eh, George? Come on, Peter, get in, get in, man, don't take all day.'

'That's right. Billy-tea's the best,' drawled George. 'Boil it over the old gum-leaves and get a bit o' smoke into it and it's good-oh.'

## *Chapter 4*

### BILLY-TEA IN THE DANDENONGS

Mrs Newsome leaned back happily as they drove off.

They left the ten- and twelve-story buildings of Collins Street behind and drove past Treasury Gardens to Fitzroy Gardens. Finally, they crossed one of the arched stone bridges spanning the Yarra River and went down the beautiful St Kilda Road, planted its whole length with various English trees just coming into green leaf. But they were glad when they found themselves away on the road to the Dandenongs.

At first they passed a good deal of traffic; lorries with bales of wheat and wool; trucks of fruit-cases going in to Melbourne. All kinds of berry-fruit grow in the southern part of Victoria: gooseberries, strawberries and red-currants, as well as other fruit, such as plums, cherry-plums and greengages, and presently they began to pass orchards.

'I thought we'd make a lazy day of it and stop whenever we feel inclined, as we've only about thirty miles or so to do,' said their father. 'We did have rather a rush at Perth, didn't we?'

'Look, there are the hills,' said Mrs Newsome.

'I suppose those are the Dandenongs, Mummy,' said Anne.

'And you say ranges, Mummy, not hills,' corrected Peter, as they looked at the brilliant blue in the distance, which has to be seen to be believed. Soon they wound through thick forest, as their mother called it, but she was again corrected by Peter. 'They don't say forests or woods here at all; they call it all bush, don't they, George?'

'Yeah, that's right. Sometimes in the old settled parts they call it brush when it's like this, thicker than ordinary bush.'

'Is brush very different from bush, then?' asked Mrs Newsome.

George considered. 'Yeah, I s'pose it is. Yes, it looks greener and more—er—tropical-like, more of them ferns and sassafras-trees an' things. Fewer gums, that's it. Fewer gums.'

## BILLY-TEA IN THE DANDENONGS

On and on they went, up the long winding road, now looking down into the gloom of gullies where tree-ferns swayed, now running beside high banks sloping to the road upon which grew all kinds of fern beside the tall trees, and again more orchards.

'Look, there's a view now,' said George, pausing after a steep climb as they reached two magnificent gums whose thick trunks were splashed with colour, their low branches making an arch through which a distant view of Melbourne's buildings, like a drawing on the horizon, could be seen beyond the plain with its orchards, farms, and bush.

They leaned on the post-and-rail fence and looked. The silence was intense. In the still air they could hear cocks crowing, the lowing of cattle, the gobble of a turkeycock, and men's voices. A bee flew by and settled on a flower near Anne as she stood feeling the silky place on the tree-trunk where the bark had peeled off, leaving a grey satin covering behind. She held a long, hard leaf in her hand—it was tough, and difficult to tear. The distant trees were dark, almost black in the brilliant sun. George told them they were now on the lower crest of the Dandenongs.

'Yer want to go to Marysville or Healesville to see tall trees in this State. Some there you'll see two hundred, three hundred feet high,' said George.

'It all looks very large and empty,' said Anne, as she gazed at the wide expanse around.

'It seems like that because we're not used to it,' said her mother.

'Too many people in England,' cut in George. 'I can understand youse feelin' this is too big. I was in England during the war. Never saw anything like it. People on top of each other. Crowds, anywhere, any town. Too much fer me. But they know how to farm.'

They passed another orchard, the trees in rows like those they'd seen outside Perth. 'Apples,' said George, waving his hand. 'Peaches, apricots, quinces, greengages, anything you like grows here. You know all about Australian jam and tinned fruit.'

'Do they make a living when there's so much fruit about? When I think of all the people on the other side of the world, especially in England, who would think themselves in heaven if they could have some! There must be an enormous market,' said Mr Newsome.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

'Yeah. If they'd get some more fruit-canning and jam factories going, I guess these chaps'd never look back. They make a livin' all right, just now, but they got ter *work*. 'Tisn't easy money,' George told him.

Cattle came sometimes to the post-and-wire fences to gaze at them, and waded fatly into the creeks, under the shade of wattle-and-gum-trees.

'There's Olinda over there,' said George. 'Whereabouts do yer want ter stop fer lunch? S'pose we'd better find a possey<sup>1</sup> near a creek.'

'Let's look at the map. Any nice spot you can suggest about halfway up the hills will do.'

'Good-oh. S'pose we go on a bit further into the ranges then. We want to get to the trig.<sup>2</sup> station on top of Mount Dandenong for tea.'

It was settled that they should go on through Kalista and Olinda, two small bush settlements whose scattered shacks and one-storied houses with gay gardens seemed to be in the middle of the bush. They liked the look of the wide, shady verandas attached to some of the houses, but they thought most of the houses themselves very ugly in design and material—weather-board, with glaring corrugated-iron roofs. Anne had hoped they'd stop at Sassafras because it was a good word to say.

'Wonder what it means,' she murmured.

'Sassafras is a tree. Grows in the gullies and thick brush,' said George, whose hearing seemed particularly acute.

He turned into the bush off the road and cruised round a little. After a short search they came to an open grassy glade between some wattle-trees and gums in heavy flower. Grey, oddly-shaped boulders lay about. The creek was some twenty feet below. Just the place to boil the billy. Soon the baskets and bags were out of the car and spread on the striped red table-cloth. George made sure there were no bull-ants' or any other kind of ants' nests about, and showed Anne and Peter an untidy looking mound of twigs and fine earth about two feet high at

<sup>1</sup> Possey. A spot, a place to stop at. (Short for 'position').

<sup>2</sup> Trig. station. Trigonometrical station from which surveyors, etc. can take bearings.

## BILLY-TEA IN THE DANDENONGS

the end of the glade. 'Now, you keep away from that, youse two, unless you want ter get bit,' he admonished them. 'Them's greenheads. And I wouldn't try stirring them up with a stick either.'

Mrs Newsome was unpacking the hamper. 'They don't seem to believe much in sandwiches,' she said, as knives and forks, salad-cream in a bottle, lettuce and tomatoes in a bowl, hard-boiled eggs and other things came to light. 'Ham and tongue ready sliced and a loaf of bread, too!'

George regarded it all with a critical eye. 'Expect that there 'am and tongue's meant fer tea. Where's the tea and chops?'

'Chops!' said Mrs Newsome weakly, as Anne and Peter came up with another parcel and the fruit they had bought.

'Oh, look, Mummy. Look at this big tree-fern. Let's sit under our ferny umbrella for lunch.'

'Frank, what's this about chops?' asked Mrs Newsome as her husband came up dangling the billy for all to see, and George went off and began to light a fire against one of the grey boulders.

'Oh, that's my little surprise. We're going to cook them in front of the fire on the end of a stick in true Australian fashion. You don't have to worry, dear. George and I will do it. Now then, you two, what about some water from that creek for the billy?'

'You mean George will do it,' grinned Peter impudently as he took the billy and started off for the creek.

Soon the fire was blazing away; the loose bark, twigs and leaves made splendid kindling, catching fire as though soaked in petrol, as Anne remarked. George drove a forked stick into the ground, rested another across from it to the boulder and hung the billy of water on it. Another pronged stick did duty as a long fork on which the chops, two or three at a time, were stuck and held in front of the fire.

'Best loin chops, I was told,' said Mr Newsome, squatting in front of the blaze and getting rather red in the face.

Mrs Newsome laughed. 'You do look funny. I'm sure they'll be very nice, but it seems rather messy. I'm glad I brought Anne's playsuit. I'm beginning to wish I'd brought her bathing costume! She could splash that with chops and tea, but not that new frock.'

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

'Well, let her change, or else skip round in her pants,' said Mr Newsome, struggling with his job. 'Ah, here's George.' And he handed the cooking over with relief. 'How are they doing?'

George gave the chops a professional look. 'Grand. Just want turning. She's jake. What d'you think of us as cooks?' he called to Mrs Newsome.

Anne now appeared from behind a tree in her playsuit, and seating herself on the dust-rug from the car began arranging the fruit in a castle. 'How far are we from Melbourne now, Daddy?' she asked. Daddy thought about twenty miles or so.

Mrs Newsome came over to the fire. 'We're all anxious to see this famous billy-tea being made. Oh, the nice new billy is all black already.'

George took the lid off, whilst the fragrant wood-smoke curled round it. 'Just about boiling,' he said, and seized the packet of tea.

'We don't like it *too* strong,' said Mrs Newsome a little anxiously as he prepared to tip a quarter of a pound into the boiling water. 'Look, let me measure it, here's a spoon. There are only five of us, we'll probably want second cups. I should think six spoonfuls?'

George regarded her sadly. 'You'll burn yourself. I'll do it. And make it ten or eleven for luck.' And he leaned over and measured it out. 'Bush tea's always strong,' he added with a grin, as he stirred the billy, regardless.

Soon they were all enjoying their juicy grilled chops. Slightly charred on the outside, they tasted delicious with fresh bread and butter and salad.

'They do taste different from anything you cook at home,' said Anne. 'I'd love to gnaw my bone.'

'Well, do,' said her father.

They enjoyed the smoky flavour of the tea, too. As Mrs Newsome remarked, you pay quite a lot for smoky-flavoured China tea at home, and here the smoky flavour was to be had for nothing! 'It's very good indeed, George. A little more, please.'

George said that they might have brought two billies if they

## BILLY-TEA IN THE DANDENONGS

were fussy about their tea, then they could pour more hot water on to the fresh tea. But *he* never did that. It was jake to put more water on top of the tea and boil her up again. Altogether, it was a lovely picnic, and when at last they had finished the fruit-salad and topped that off with some little biscuits, Anne and Peter had fun washing the plates and mugs with George down at the creek, while Mr Newsome lit his pipe and leaned contentedly against a tree. George made them bring the empty bottles and the billy back from the creek full of water which, with the remains of the tea, he poured carefully over the dying fire, before raking the remaining ashes out. He stood watching it for a moment. 'Don't like the look of it. She wants more water.' And he started off to the creek again.

'He seems very fussy about that fire,' said Peter.

'It looked quite black to me, certainly,' remarked Mr Newsome, as George poured more water carefully all over the fire and the ground round it.

'Like to go down and get another billyful?' he called to Peter, who, nothing loth, scrambled off down the bank again. This time George was satisfied. 'Place goes up like a match-box. Easily start a bush fire from smouldering ashes on a dry sunny day like this.'

'It seemed black enough,' said Peter, climbing into the car beside him.

'Yeah, but right from the beginning of September on, all through the summer, it's dangerous. Don't want to set the ranges on fire.'

'N-n-no. I suppose fire engines wouldn't be much good with all these trees around,' said Anne, looking up at the tall trunks whose ragged bark hung down in strips.

George laughed. 'Fire engines! Can you see them comin' up them 'ills or this 'ere road? They'd never get here in time, anyway, even if they was any good, which they wouldn't be. No, if we was to leave one spark o' that fire, we'd be liable.'

'Liable for what?' asked Peter.

'Liable. Prosecuted by the police you could be, if they could find who started it.'

He paused, match in hand, as Mr Newsome offered him a cigarette. 'Bit of ordinary broken glass, a bottle, end uv a

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

cigarette, few sparks from a fire in a puff o' wind, and away she goes. Whole countryside on fire.'

They looked round. 'So quickly?' asked Mrs Newsome.

'Too right, specially where there's grass. Look how quickly them leaves caught. I don't like fires. When we were kids we were burnt out by a bush fire. Flames a hundred feet high. Bits o' burnt grass and leaves fell from the sky for days. We drove off an' raced the fire behind the wind, but me father went back to save the place and 'ad to stand up to his neck in the creek for hours.'

'Good heavens, how awful,' said Mrs Newsome.

'Nearly as bad as being bombed in London,' said Mr Newsome.

'Bout the same, only different.'

'Haven't they found anything to stop them?' asked Peter.

'Well, just lately I 'eard some talk of using planes, but there's been nothin' up till now.'

'Will they jump a deep river or a creek?'

'If it's wide enough, no. If the wind's blowing behind the flames they'll cross a narrer creek. If the wind drops or changes you've got some chance o' getting the fire out.'

'I'll bet these trees would fall with a crash,' remarked Peter, looking up at the tall timber they were passing through.

They were zigzagging round hairpin bends now, right in among the ranges, up and up. They looked down on the deep green of the gullies where tree-ferns spread their dark umbrellas under flowering trees. Sometimes George would stop while they 'listened' to the silence. Then they'd hear the water gurgling through a secret runnel where emerald mosses grew, and birds would call or screech. 'That's a parrot,' he'd say when there was a screech high above them, and presently a flash of brilliant green, blue and red would pass. 'That's a minah. Hear the magpie? Ah, hear that? That's a bell-bird. Sh-sh.' And the liquid, silver notes rang in the silence like stones thrown into a deep pool or like a tiny silver bell being struck once, twice. The sounds seemed to come from the air around them, and then from the depths of the gully. That, George told them, was the bell-bird, who sings near water.

## BILLY-TEA IN THE DANDENONGS

'Hear that chap chopping with a tommy-hawk?' he asked a moment later.

They listened intently, and distinctly heard a sound just like wood being chopped with a hatchet in the distance. 'That's a lyre-bird or bower-bird,' whispered George. 'We might see 'im if we wait a bit.' But though they hardly dared to breathe for some time, the sound of chopping died away and they saw nothing.

'What a place for robbers,' whispered Anne, as even the tinging of a bell-bird ceased.

'Bushrangers, eh?' asked George, driving on. 'Ah, none o' them *now*. Used to be about this way seventy or eighty years ago, they say.'

'Plenty of good hide-outs in these ranges,' remarked Mr Newsome.

'Too right,' agreed George, turning his attention more closely to the road.

When they reached the top of Mount Dandenong, they wandered about looking at the vast expanse spread out before them. The day was clear and they could see for miles and miles across what looked to them a lonely countryside, yet they were only thirty miles from Melbourne.

No little villages with crooked streets and church spires nestled among those hills; no tipsy-looking oast-houses or eighteenth-century country mansions were set in their own domains; no rose-coloured brick walls or old barns gave shelter to beasts and cattle while acting as a fence or wall to the property, and there was no sign of a hedge anywhere. Here and there they could see the glint of sun on a corrugated-iron roof, or the low outline of a group of buildings which denoted a homestead with its veranda, or a tiny house surrounded by huge paddocks. Weeping willows bordered a stream here and there near the orchards, and one of the bright green splashes was a pepper-tree, George told them. Encircling it all, and running through it, was the bush, the great wild.

George pointed out the distant Strzlecki Ranges in Southern Gippsland, and far away, on the other side, could be seen Port Phillip, a faint blue patch where the ocean washed the shore. He couldn't tell them why the Strzlecki Ranges had such a

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

foreign-sounding name, so they had to wait till next day to ask Tufty.

'New South is away over there,' he went on, pointing. He waved his arm towards the east. 'The first explorers came into Victoria from New South Wales that way.'

'Yes, we've been reading about Batman and Hume and Hovell,' said Mr Newsome, 'and about Sir Thomas Mitchell the Surveyor-General of the 'thirties and 'forties, coming with his caravans along the Murray River, and over the Australian Alps.'

'Doesn't it seem funny to think of Alps in Australia?' said Peter.

'Up at Mount Buffalo,' said George, 'they have winter sports every year.'

Below them, like an enchanted place in a fairy-tale, asleep in the sun, lay the Yarra Valley, in its springtime growth of shining green leaves against the sombre native trees, for there had been no drought that year, the rivers were full, and summer had not yet come.

They boiled the billy again for tea, finished the cakes, and made thick buttered toast beside the embers. George showed them the young spring leaves of the gum-trees, which are red at the tips before they harden to the shape and texture of the later blue-green. After talking over the next day's programme, they packed themselves into the car and the drive back to Melbourne began.

The city lights were beginning to show as they sped across the plain and into the suburbs.

So ended another happy day.

## *Chapter 5*

### LOOKING FOR THE LYRE-BIRD

Next morning their father had some business to see to, so Peter and Anne with their mother made a little tour of Melbourne before meeting Tufty who had promised to lunch with them. They were to drive out to Sherbrooke Forest Reservation through Oakleigh and Upper Ferntree Gully in the afternoon, having billy-tea in the forest; perhaps they might even see a lyre-bird!

The warm spring morning found them in holiday spirits walking slowly down tree-lined Collins Street, where they caught a tram for the Botanical Gardens. Here they wandered round among the flowers and lakes, where there were hundreds of duck and other water-birds. Then they stayed near the Lily Lake until it was time to turn back to the city. Eventually they found themselves outside the National Art Gallery and Public Library in Swanston Street. Mrs Newsome insisted on going into the Gallery for a little in spite of the protests of Anne and Peter who thought it more fun outside. Once inside they were surprised at its size and the fine pictures. Many were marked 'Felton Bequest'. This is a fund that was left to the State of Victoria to enable the Gallery to buy famous pictures from England and Europe. Thus Melbourne has the finest collection of pictures in the Commonwealth, and is particularly proud of a Madonna and Child by Van Eyck and a Pietà by Memling. But Mrs Newsome was eager to see the work of Australian artists, and spent a good half-hour looking at this section. Perhaps the most vivid memories the two children carried away were of the pictures by painters like George Lambert and of beautiful woodcuts by Lionel Lindsay and Margaret Preston.

They enjoyed having Tufty to lunch with them. He told funny stories and creased up the corners of his eyes as he laughed. It was a good lunch. They had an Australian fish called schnapper [pronounced 'snapper'] which was served with melted butter, grilled

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

bananas, and mashed potatoes. The grown-ups had pale honey-coloured Australian wine. However, there was little time to linger, and they were hustled off to pick up their coats, baskets, and billy for another tea in the bush. George was taking them again.

Mrs Newsome remarked as they drove along how much more English Melbourne seemed than Perth. Tufty agreed and said that it is more English than any other Australian city except perhaps one or two in Tasmania. They quickly reached Fern-tree Gully, which they drove through on the way to the Reserve. As they followed the downward road where a pale light filtered through the green of innumerable creepers, vines, ferns, and tall, slender trees, all likeness to England vanished. Wild clematis, its white flowers gleaming, climbed up some of the trees; stag-horn ferns spread their long, narrow leaves in clusters two or three feet long.

'Look, there's maidenhair growing wild,' exclaimed Mrs Newsome, leaning out.

As they turned a curve, they heard bell-birds tinkling among the trees, though Tufty said he wasn't at all sure that it was not a lyre-bird or a bower-bird 'just tricking us'. Both were marvellous mimics, he told them, and could deceive even experienced bird-men. Victorian lyre-birds were rather smaller than those of N.S.W.

They weren't sorry to come out of the deep ravines of the gully-road into the bright sunshine again. They drove through Sherbrooke Forest Reserve to a look-out and car-park, searching for a likely spot where lyre-birds or bower-birds might be seen.

As they slowed down, Tufty asked if they were prepared to keep absolutely still and not move or speak. 'I'm very doubtful if we shall be lucky enough to see any, you know,' he said. 'Lyre-birds are so very shy, and we're a large party.'

'Couldn't we sit in the car? We wouldn't tread on leaves or twigs then,' said Mrs Newsome.

'No, I'm afraid that won't do. We'll have to walk. The birds are very quick of sight and hearing, and the smell and size of the car might frighten them away altogether.'

Some other cars were parked near the look-out, too, and they

## LOOKING FOR THE LYRE-BIRD

chatted with the occupants for a few minutes. 'You're almost certain to hear one or two birds even if you don't see them, as well as bell-birds and possums,' the strangers told them.

'Any bears?' asked Anne, hopefully.

But the strangers said No, not here. They had to live where their own special gum-leaves grew. Tufty fell behind with Mr and Mrs Newsome.

Anne and Peter soon found other excitements—an emerald-eyed lizard that flicked under a stone like lightning at their approach; brilliant peacock-blue and scarlet butterflies; smooth, round, snowy pebbles which Tufty told them later were quartz, and would emit sparks if struck together in the dark; and a waterfall. They stood on the culvert to watch it. Over and over the water came, never pausing in its fall or changing its direction. When the wind blew, scattering bright drops, it visibly moved aside, but continued its even flow. Anne breathed a sigh of delight.

Peter nudged her in the ribs. 'Wake up. We can climb down and get behind it.'

It took a few minutes, and they were just enjoying the sensation of hiding behind a curtain of water with their backs to a wet rock covered with tiny glow-worms, when they heard their father and Tufty calling. So they had to abandon the idea of looking for caves and climb up the damp prickly bank again.

Tufty said there wouldn't be caves round here. 'But you ought to see those in the Blue Mountains—Jenolan Caves. They say bushrangers used to hide mobs of stolen cattle in them, but they're more likely to have been small mobs of sheep, I think.'

'Weren't there ever any bushrangers round here then?' asked Peter.

'Oh, I daresay. They used to hold up the gold escort occasionally on its way to Melbourne from Ballarat or Bendigo.' Then he began to tell them about the lyre-birds.

'They are the most extraordinary creatures. Not only does the lyre-bird, like the bower-bird, imitate almost any sound—the human voice, other birds' songs, the crack of a whip, an axe, a saw on a log, a car in low gear—but he dances for his mate,

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

and builds a platform on which to do it. Sometimes he practises his song or dance alone. He chooses a place he likes, generally with a background of fern or creepers, carrying away anything he regards as rubbish, and smoothing the ground. He also brings his own decorations, flowers, bits of coloured rag, or tin, to the dancing-platform, and then he dances to the hen-bird in the spring, the courting season.'

'We've seen pictures of him with his tail up, walking, but never dancing,' said Anne.

'Well, as you know, his tail then looks exactly like the ancient Greek lyre. What isn't so generally known is that he can expand it, spreading it like a great fan over his head. He doesn't stand it erect behind him as he does his lyre, or as a peacock does his tail, but sweeps it over his body, covering his head as though he were a ballerina curtsying with a huge fan.'

'How extraordinary. Can the bower-bird do the same?' asked Mrs Newsome.

'Oh, no. He dances for his mate in the spring, and imitates other birds. But he hasn't the wonderful tail, and he certainly hasn't the wonderful song of the lyre-bird.'

Then Tufty told them about the lyre-bird who made friends with a lady living alone in a small house in the Victorian mountains. As she worked in her garden, this bird gradually became so friendly that he visited her every day. He would sit on her gatepost or on the balustrade of her veranda which looked across the valleys to the distant mountains, and there he would pour forth song after song. The music varied.

'The most extraordinary thing,' went on Tufty, 'was that his hostess declared that his repertoire of song grew as the years went by. He stayed away for some weeks almost every year, once for months. When he returned he always had fresh songs, and even the range and depth of his voice was said to have increased. Yet they are usually very shy.'

'Extraordinary,' said Mr Newsome. 'Who ever heard of a lark going off for some weeks and then coming back with fresh songs? Or a nightingale who danced?'

'Gee-whiz! Do they *really* dance?' asked Peter.

'Oh, yes, solo. They prepare their dancing-platform carefully,

## LOOKING FOR THE LYRE-BIRD

and like bower-birds show a decided preference for some colours, rejecting others.'

'And the lyre-bird's song, have you heard it?'

'Only once. I've heard them imitate other birds, but the real song only once. It's impossible to describe it. He sings until he's tired, and the song lasts for at least several minutes.'

'Have you heard nightingales?' asked Anne.

'Oh, yes, often. They're beautiful, and though their song isn't like the lyre-birds', which is longer, I should think it compares most closely with it. Why the lyre-birds' song isn't more famous I cannot imagine. The tragedy is that as the heavy undergrowth and forests are cut out, the lyre-bird vanishes with the ferns.'

'What would Keats have written if he had heard the lyre-bird sing, I wonder?' said Mrs Newsome.

'What, indeed! Perhaps we'll be lucky and see one to-day. They sing at dawn, sunrise, and sunset more frequently than at other times, so I shall be surprised if we do hear one.'

A small, furry thing suddenly scuttled along a branch. 'Hullo, we've wakened a possum out of his beauty sleep.'

The possum was looking down at them with bright eyes, his little black nostrils working, his very long tail wound round a branch. Then he unwound it and scuttled higher, peered at them again, and as though to complete the exhibition flung his tail several times round a branch, swung himself lower, and chattering softly, disappeared into the bush.

'We ought to be near that place where we thought we'd wait for a lyre-bird to come by,' said Tufty, looking about.

'Something's biting my leg, I think,' said Anne, stooping to scratch and look. Then she gave a yell. 'Daddy, come quickly. Take it off. Take it off. There's a huge black grub on my leg.'

It was a leech, sucking her blood, and it took some minutes to detach. After that they sat down for a few minutes' rest, and were just about to walk on when a brown bird about the size of a pheasant, but minus the pheasant's long, shining tail, stalked out from the undergrowth opposite. They all stayed stone-still whilst he scratched busily, pecked, cocked an eye at them, scratched among the leaves again for a worm, and after

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

looking from side to side as though suspicious, pecked at a spray of clematis and walked out of sight.

Tufty whispered, 'That was a bower-bird. Keep still.'

They didn't need telling twice. 'He must have been carrying the clematis off for his bower just as you told us,' whispered Anne. They waited a few minutes more, but he gave no further sign of life.

'He took very little notice of us. Didn't you say they're very shy?' asked Mrs Newsome.

She had hardly finished speaking when a shriek very like Anne's rent the air, followed by a few gurgling notes. Tufty burst out laughing. 'You spoke just a minute too soon. He must have taken considerable notice of Anne's yell, and now he's trying it out and laughing at us.'

'Why, he must have been watching us all the time quite close,' exclaimed Peter. 'There, Anne, that's what you sound like.'

Anne could hardly believe it. 'Is that that *bird*?' she asked ungrammatically. 'Well, really——!' Speech failed her.

They were walking back to the look-out for tea when suddenly Mr Newsome, who was ahead, held up a warning hand. Across the path and into a sunny clearing strolled the lyre-bird! No one could mistake him. There was the shape of a slender Greek lyre inscribed upon the air in tones of brown, rising quite eighteen inches above the bird's body. He walked jerkily, as birds do, and, taking no notice of the frozen figures watching him, disappeared into the scrub, his delicate head moving in rhythm with his walk.

'There now, we've seen them both. Our luck's dead in,' remarked Tufty. After that, they felt more than ready to enjoy afternoon tea; George had the billy almost boiling, and was busily toasting date scones at the fire on the end of a stick, with the butter-jar beside him. Anne took on the buttering.

After tea they drove some miles further into the foothills by an old and dusty track. They found they had to grip hard to prevent themselves from literally hitting the roof. As they bumped up and down over roots and stones and ruts, Tufty said that this was mild compared with what the pioneers had had to put up with. 'Imagine it when there were no roads at all,'

## LOOKING FOR THE LYRE-BIRD

he said, 'or when there was only just room for the wheel-tracks of one vehicle—a bullock waggon or cart. When it rained they were heavily bogged.'

They passed a number of farms, mostly modern dairy-farms, with pigs, poultry, and vegetables as a side-line. The majority of them were small ones, about 300 or 400 acres, George said, as they saw more fruit trees. A few deserted little orchards with tumble-down houses showed where old selections<sup>1</sup> had once been. The larger properties, sheep-stations, and the wheat country were many miles away.

They passed a man tramping steadily along with a neat grey bundle on his back, and carrying the inevitable billy-can. He signalled, and George stopped the car. 'Funny way he's got his trousers tied round his knees,' whispered Peter.

'Sorry, mate, but we're full up,' said George, indicating the back seat.

'Yeah. I see. Gotta match?'

'Care to ride on the running-board for a bit?' asked George.

Tufty and Mr Newsome leaned out, each with a box of matches. 'Going far?'

He took both. 'Thanks. Over the ranges.'

'Shearing?' asked Tufty.

'Yeah. Thanks. So long.' And he walked off.

'Not exactly talkative,' remarked Mr Newsome.

'Bushmen aren't. *He* said a lot to strangers,' answered Tufty.

Mrs Newsome wanted to know if there were many tramps about like that. Tufty and the driver both looked at her gravely, even sadly. 'He wasn't a tramp,' they both said together. 'He was a swaggie—a traveller.'

'Humpin' his bluey out fer the shearin'. Shearin' starts about beginning of September in Victoria. Very few about these days,' added George.

'He might be an odd-job man or a shearer. Couldn't say.' Tufty lit a cigarette, while Mrs Newsome tried to look as though she knew exactly what they meant.

<sup>1</sup> A selection is land (uncultivated bush) thrown open by the Government Lands Department for selection or part purchase, generally with government aid to farmers without means to pay for it.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

But Peter was anxious to learn the language, especially as he secretly hoped to stay with Michael and Helen on their father's station, and had a horror of looking a fool later on. So—'What's a swaggie and a bluey, Tufty?' he asked.

Tufty and George patiently explained that a swaggie is a chap who foots it, accepting a lift whenever he can get one, rarely found so near a town, and walking from job to job in the inland, the outback, or the distant parts of the country. Sometimes he has a horse. Victoria is the smallest of the States, so that the expression 'out west' or 'the far outback' is seldom heard there. The swaggie used to walk from station to station, often from one State to another, on different jobs. He may take on shearing in the season, he may act as boundary-rider, or give a hand droving a mob of cattle or sheep; he may elect to stay and do odd jobs—riding round the boundary lines of a property seeing to broken fences and posts, preventing stock from straying, and keeping a look-out for missing animals; or he may go out and join rabbit-trappers.

'He carries his swag, that is, his bundle of possessions—a change of clothes, perhaps, soap, matches, perhaps a book, and any odd necessities, with his flour and his tea (his rations, we say), packed in his billy. He camps wherever it suits him, sleeping near his fire. Everything is rolled neatly and according to a set plan in the blanket, which is then slung over his back, with odd parcels hanging from its strap or rope. But he is disappearing.'

'And why is it a "bluey"?' asked Peter again.

'Well,' drawled Tufty, 'I suppose in the early days when sheep-shearers literally walked from station to station, the army or any rough bush blankets were blue. Now they're grey.'

'So a swagman or a swaggie is a hitch-hiker?' asked Mr Newsome.

'N-no, not exactly. He's a bushman. He lives in and on the bush. He's generally going somewhere, to some station, or to pick up a definite job, odd-jobbing or shearing on the way. If he hasn't got a horse he walks. Most people in this country, if they're driving a car or a buggy, still offer a lift to anyone walking. But a swaggie isn't always ready to accept a lift. The man and the expression are both dying out.'

## LOOKING FOR THE LYRE-BIRD

'And "hump"—I s'pose that's to carry?' persisted Peter.

'Exactly, my boy. To carry on your back. Sometimes he gets the other kind of hump as well when people pass him by in cars! So to hump your bluey means to walk a long way in the bush carrying your swag on your back. And in the bush swag doesn't mean stolen goods as it does in England.'

'Well, I seem to have read something about a sundowner turning up for food in the back-country,' said Mr Newsome. 'Tell us about him, Tufty.'

'A sundowner? Now, he is rather more of a tramp, though not quite. People used to speak of a sundowner out west in N.S.W., Queensland, and in the north-west. Before the country was settled, when there were only a few isolated stations, anyone who came at any hour of the day was sure of some tucker and a shake-down, or whatever the boss had to offer. Stations had to lay in stores for six months at a time, sometimes more, just as they do in some parts of the Northern Territory to-day. But the chap who times his arrival at sunset, when he knows he won't be expected to work, and asks for "rations", is a sundowner. Any station owner will always give a man a bit of tea, salt, sugar, flour—those are his rations. Sometimes the man is just a harmless old vagabond, for ever on the move, an old bloke who couldn't endure life in a house, let alone a town. Of course we have tramps too, and very ugly customers they can be, demanding a lift and then presenting a pistol at your ribs, or driving off with the car if you get out to open a gate. You always want to be sure to make the chap you've given a lift to open the gate. Don't do it yourself.'

With such talk they beguiled the way as the car bumped along the uneven road until they reached the bitumen highway again, whilst the sun slanted towards the horizon, making the pointed gum-leaves shine, as the car wove its way in and out amidst the deepening blue of the ranges, across the plain and back to the lights of Melbourne.

That evening Anne and Peter were allowed to go to a circus with Tufty and his nephew of ten, but as one circus is very like another, we will leave them there to enjoy it.

Perhaps the most vivid and exciting day of their visit to Vic-

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

toria was when they went to Healesville and saw the Sir Colin Mackenzie Sanctuary for Australian Flowers and Animals—to give its full title. Healesville is a small town about forty miles from Melbourne, and it lies in a wide valley encircled by mountains. Four peaks ring the valley; Mount St Leonard, the highest, however, is only 3,304 feet. Three miles further on is the sanctuary or wild reserve at the foot of Mount Riddell. Tufty, his married sister, and her little boy and girl joined them. This time Mrs Newsome was determined to have her own way a little, so she brought cold fowl and salads ready sliced, though of course they had billy-tea, and potatoes roasted in the ashes.

They wandered about for a long time in the park, and saw not only the attractive little koala bears but kangaroos, wombats, wallabies, and wallaroos. Both Anne and Tufty's little niece were delighted to nurse a sleepy baby bear, and so was everyone else, for to see one is to want to cuddle it. There were also ring-tailed possums, small black-faced wallabies, and a kangaroo with the head of her baby peeping out of her pouch. They were all thrilled when mother kangaroo took a few of her long bounds and was quickly lost to sight.

'I wish she'd come back and do it again,' exclaimed Peter. 'What leaps she took!' The rock-wallabies, a small variety of kangaroo, were apt to hop away, too, though not so far in one jump.

They went to Geelong and Corio Bay by train. At Geelong they saw a sea-front almost like that at an English seaside resort; paved, lined with stocky palms, and with a sea-wall enclosing an inner harbour. The small city itself was full of people, shops, parks, factories, and chimneys, for Geelong is a growing industrial centre, one of the places where Australians are now making their own tweeds out of their famous wool.

What interested the Newsome family most, however, was Geelong Grammar School, which they visited by appointment. It is some distance out of the town and is run on the lines of an English public school. Peter was surprised at the impressive group of buildings, and lost in admiration of the cricket oval, the games fields, and the swimming-pool with its showers and lockers running off the concrete path surrounding it. Mrs Newsome was

## LOOKING FOR THE LYRE-BIRD

most interested when the matron of one of the houses showed her the classrooms and bathrooms in her particular domain. All the bathrooms are fitted with rows of showers.

They were then taken to the school hall, known as the Bracebridge-Wilson Hall, after the headmaster who reorganized the school and established its traditions in the 'eighties. They admired the quadrangle with its fine sculptured figure, a memorial to the Old Boys who fell in the 1914-18 war. It is one of the finest examples of George Lambert's work.

This was their last Victorian excursion, for they sailed for Sydney next day, and settled down to wondering what it would be like. Helen and Michael had gone ahead by train.

## *Chapter 6*

### MEETING THE MACNAMARAS AGAIN

They were soon to know, for three days later the ship picked up the pilot in his bowler hat, outside Sydney Heads. A pearly light hung over the sea, veiling the rocky bluffs in front of them as the sun appeared through the faint milky mist. Peter and Anne were up and leaning over the deck railings by half-past seven to watch the pilot's boat fussing out to meet them. Presently Tufty and their parents joined them.

'All ready and packed up,' said Mrs Newsome, putting an arm round each as they watched the two bluffs called the Heads coming closer. 'You'd never think the ship could get through such a narrow opening, would you?' she exclaimed as they came level.

The dark purple and tossing swell of the open sea changed to calm and limpid greens and blues, the loud crash of waves against the cruel rocks of the Heads died down as they left the narrow passage behind. From a distance it was almost invisible.

'Now you know why an experienced navigator like Cook was deceived and didn't go through the opening he saw,' said Tufty. 'It was over at Circular Quay, where we're going now, that Phillip landed in 1788. He came in by boat after anchoring his fleet round the corner at Botany Bay near La Perouse.'

The width of this translucent expanse, the piled-up buildings of a great city gleaming in the distance through a faint golden mist, the houses and lawns sloping to the edge of the foreshores—all this silenced the crowd round the decks, as the great half-moon of Sydney harbour spread to right and left before them.

Tufty pointed out North and South Heads, the North Shore and Rushcutters' Bay on the opposite side. 'And there,' as they swept round a curve, 'that platform and mass of girders, is the

## MEETING THE MACNAMARAS AGAIN

new Captain Cook graving dock, built during the war to service the British and American fleets of the South-West Pacific. Across on the other side is Manly, where you'll go surfing, I expect.' They could just see the tall Norfolk Island pines that fringed the beach where the Pacific crashed in. Almost opposite, within the harbour, he showed them Vaucluse with its rocky little bay, near Wentworth House, a famous place they must visit.

'Look at all the little two-decker boats going about,' said Peter. Those, he was told, are the famous ferry-boats, but owing to the transport muddle, the tranquil beauty of water-travel is dying out.

Slowly the great ship turned in towards Circular Quay, where she would berth, leaving behind the northern foreshores, or the North Shore, as it is known locally. They passed Government House, whose wide lawns adjoin those of the Botanical Gardens, and tied up near a ferry-boat from which people were pouring on their way to work. They had arrived! The formalities of disembarkation took about an hour, but at length they were down the gangway and on the wharf.

To their surprise and pleasure Michael was on the quay to meet them, with a tall man whom he introduced as his father, Mr MacNamara. Michael explained that their departure for the north-west had been delayed, and that he and his father and mother were staying on for a short time at their house at Balmoral. 'The name of one of the inner harbour beaches near Mosman,' explained Mr MacNamara.

He had come, he said, to collect Peter and Anne and take them over to Balmoral for the day—'and the night, too, if this would be any help.' The two cast imploring glances at their father as he hesitated, but he was given no chance to refuse. 'Now, what about yourselves? We are expecting you over this afternoon when you've got through with customs and baggage. To stay on for dinner this evening, of course.'

A little overcome by such unlooked-for help from strangers, they explained that they had booked rooms for the first few nights before leaving England. 'And what about food? We're such a party,' said Mrs Newsome.

Mr MacNamara brushed that aside. 'We've never been as

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

short as you were in England. We couldn't allow you to dine at the hotel on your first night,' he said.

'Besides, we kill our own meat up at the station,' added Michael.

'Good, that's settled. I'll run down to Mosman Wharf and pick you up this afternoon if you'll 'phone us when you get there.' Mr MacNamara gave them the 'phone number, gathered Peter and Anne together, said good-bye quickly, and disappeared. 'We'll pick up Helen and then take these two for a short run round Sydney,' he said to Michael, who reminded him that they had two small commissions for Mrs MacNamara, and said that he was sure the two visitors would like a dip before lunch, which they could easily manage if they stepped on it.

'Don't you think the wind a bit cool?' asked his father. 'We don't want them to catch cold.'

'Cold!' echoed 'the two' referred to. 'Why, we think it's a nice warm day.'

'Almost *hot*,' said Anne.

'It's more than we do,' said Michael. 'Just you wait a bit till the summer.'

They had left Circular Quay and were now in a broad street, flanked with tall flats and houses on one side, and gardens on the other.

'This is Macquarie Street,' said Mr MacNamara. 'There's Government House over there, we're alongside its gardens now. You can just see it through the trees. Its grounds run into the Botanical Gardens.'

'They're lovely, aren't they?' said Anne politely. 'And I love the fat little palms all along them.'

Michael told her there was a frog in the grass under each tree. 'On summer nights they all sing and croak in a different key, just to keep up with the Conservatorium of Music over there.'

'Don't believe a word he says, Anne,' said Mr MacNamara. He drove them close up to the Conservatorium so that they could look down at the gardens which, at one end, ran almost to the sea's edge. The blue harbour, with Pinchgut Island in the middle, stretched out in a wide curve before them.

'Many office workers come and eat their lunch on the lawns



*The Australian News and Information Bureau.*

*'Humping his bluey.' One of the 'Swaggies' still found occasionally on Australian bush roads. There are now very few of them left.*



*The Australian News and Information Bureau*



*The Agent General for N S W*

ABOVE Out on the Hcalesville Road, about 26 miles from Melbourne BELOW Sydney Harbour and Bridge, with Pinchgut Island (Fort Denison) just visible near the Bridge Pinchgut Island was so named because early convicts sent there from Sydney were half-starved!

## MEETING THE MACNAMARAS AGAIN

in the sun every day though we haven't yet got the excellent habit you have in England of having a band or an orchestra to play to us in our parks—not in Sydney, at any rate. And this large building, at the top of the Gardens, is the State reference library—the public library of New South Wales. Next to it and facing us is the famous Mitchell Library where you can find out everything about Australia.'

'Let's stop for a minute and look back,' suggested Michael. 'Look, Pete, you can see the funnels of your ship sticking up above the palms there at the bottom of the street.'

'So you can,' said Peter. 'As though you could step straight from the street on to the top deck.'

'What's that statue outside the library?' asked Anne idly. Michael didn't know, but his father told them it was of a great navigator, Captain Matthew Flinders, the first commander to sail right round Australia, charting the coast on the way. This was between 1801-3. 'Haven't you read his life, Michael? Or learnt about him at school?' Michael hadn't, and Mr Mac-Namara said he would have that put right at once. 'You ought to have read it before now. You can get through it in the Christmas holidays,' he said.

'We're picking Helen up at David Jones's,' said Michael changing the subject to less dangerous ground. 'We can run past the Archibald Memorial then.'

They turned into Elizabeth Street, and presently reached an enormous shop looking onto the park. It reminded Anne of those in Regent Street, London.

'There's Helen,' she and Michael called together, as they drew up.

'Well, did you get a surprise at finding Michael and Daddy on the wharf?' she asked as she got in. Then as they drove on slowly past the bronze fountain, a group of sculpture by the French artist Sicard, where the water played amongst three classical figures, she turned to her father. 'We're going straight home, aren't we, Daddy, so that they can have a dip before lunch? If we don't have it then, we'll have a whole hour to wait afterwards.'

'Too right, we're dying to go in among the breakers and see

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

the real surf!' exclaimed Peter, who had not become quite used to Australian slang yet.

'You'll come surfing with us all right. We'll see to that. But not at Balmoral,' said Helen, her eyes alight with mischief, as she went on in her most coaxing voice, 'Do you think you could take us out to Curl-Curl or Deewhy this afternoon, Daddy?'

Mr MacNamara looked at her, a smile twitching the corners of his mouth. Well he knew that look in Helen's eyes.

'Now, not too many tricks,' he said in a low voice, and added more loudly that they'd have to see what their mother wanted to do, especially as they were expecting Anne's parents in the afternoon. Helen explained that at Balmoral there are no real breakers, as it's on the inner side of the harbour, while Mr MacNamara drove down Martin Place so that they could see the famous flower-stalls there.

'Oh!' said Anne.

The stalls, each with a brightly striped canvas awning, and filled with tiers of many-coloured flowers, were ranged along the kerb beside the arches of the G.P.O., one to each arch; roses, daffodils, narcissus, daphne, sweet-scented and dark violets, iceland poppies and golden wattle—flowers of all seasons seemed to be there. Anne wanted to know if they didn't wait for spring or summer in this country. To which Mr MacNamara replied that plants aren't quite so fussy about the seasons as they are in England. He bought some flowers, and a little posy each for the two girls, before going on.

'Well, you've seen Our 'Arbour, now for Our Bridge,' he said.

Mike pretended to be a guide and in a high-falutin' voice drew their attention to the pylons, the arch, the span, and the number of traffic-lanes, until Helen told him to shut up. Nevertheless, they looked at it with some awe as they went over, for the network of girders holding the single-span arch is very imposing. Peter tried vainly to look over both sides at once, but cars are not allowed to stop on the bridge. They felt the vibrations as a train and a tram rumbled past together. Michael told them that P. & O. liners and aircraft carriers can pass underneath quite easily.

Once across the bridge they swerved away from the bridge approaches through Neutral Bay and Mosman and so to the

## MEETING THE MACNAMARAS AGAIN

house at Balmoral, just in time for morning tea. The long two-storied house stood on a bushy cliff, shut in by a rather small ramshackle garden, from which they could hear the sound of the sea. They could see it glistening through the trees.

The moment they reached the gate, things began to happen. A dog rushed out to bark, and Mrs MacNamara appeared at the cream stone entrance porch on the veranda to welcome them in.

'So here you are. And you all managed to meet. Come along in. We're so glad you've been able to come. Michael and Helen have told us so much about you. Keep quiet, Snip. Down, bad dog! And this is Anne,' she went on in her deep musical voice.

Anne suddenly felt tongue-tied and shy. Peter was patting the dog and didn't seem to mind all these strangers one bit. She managed to say, 'Thank you very much. How do you do?' as she held out her hand. Mrs MacNamara shook hands with Peter, put an arm round Anne, called to Helen to put the flowers in water at once, and said they were just in time for morning tea. She took Rosemary, Helen's small cousin, by the hand, 'to prevent her getting into some mischief', and led them inside for sandwiches and orange drinks. Then she found some bathing costumes the others had grown out of, and they all took the short cut down the cliff path to the beach. They didn't need to use the big stone dressing-shed as they lived so close. They were delighted with the wide expanse of golden sand with not a pebble on it. They had a gorgeous swim with much splashing and ducking in the calm blue water, and came back full of beans to get dressed for lunch.

Afterwards Anne fell asleep and didn't wake till tea-time, much to her disgust. By that time her parents had arrived, and she woke to hear Mrs MacNamara offering her mother the use of the house for the summer or the next six months. She was anxious to get back to the station and the two smaller children, and she didn't want Michael and Helen to miss any more school.

'Knowing how difficult it is to find a house in Sydney just now, and as we won't be using it, I wondered whether you could put up with having Mike and Helen as additions to the family—

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

they can go to school then as day-pupils. Shore can't fit Michael in this term as a boarder, and I'm rather glad, as it's so expensive, and as they have all made friends, I thought——'

'We're hoping to get Peter in at North Shore, and it sounds too good to be true; it will be so nice for them both to have Helen and Michael to go round with,' answered Mrs Newsome warmly. She and her husband were more than thankful to accept the offer, and it was arranged that they should take over in about a week or ten days.

'It's extremely good of you to suggest it. We shall be delighted to look after Helen and Mike,' said Mr Newsome as they were shown over the house.

'You'll probably wish them further before Christmas, not to mention their school friends. Michael, being a little older than Peter, and with his sense of responsibility, will probably be able to help you in the house quite a lot, and so will Helen. Anyway, you can have Sarah, our invaluable daily,' went on Mrs Mac-Namara.

Both Anne and Peter thought it a fine plan. As Mrs Mac-Namara said, the glassed-in veranda at the back would always take a couple of extra beds if anyone had to come down from the station urgently, or if they wanted to put up a friend or two. Houses are very elastic where there are verandas, which can always be used for sleeping-out—a wonderful experience on a summer's night if you have a mosquito net, and one to which Anne and Peter looked forward.

Next morning Peter was up early and out with his father to the G.P.O. in Martin Place. They passed the bright flower-stalls, and went in through the deep arches. Peter walked up to the counter. 'Two stamps, please.'

'Ordinary letter?' asked the clerk, and as Peter nodded, he pushed them across. 'Threepence-ha'penny each,' he said.

'Oh, and I want two sixpenny air-letters, too, please.'

The clerk smiled. 'To England? Tenpence each here, sonny. Sixpenny airletters within Australia only. That'll be two and threepence please.'

'How did you know I'd just come from England?' asked Peter, seeing that there weren't many people about.

## MEETING THE MACNAMARAS AGAIN

'You'd never guess! It's the way you talk. Give yourself away as soon as you open your mouth.'

'Oh!' Peter was a little crestfallen. 'The money's just the same as in England, isn't it?' he added, examining his change.

'Yes. Just the same, only we have hardly any half-crowns, and more tray-bits.'

'Tray-bits?'

'Threepenny-bits. Little ones, like these, see?' And he showed Peter a handful of thin silver coins about the size of farthings.

## *Chapter 7*

### DUCKING AND DUMPING IN THE SURF

The next few days went quickly, with luggage to store and arrange, school interviews for both Anne and Peter, and letters to write, so that it was a week before they met the MacNamaras again. It was Mr MacNamara's last day in Sydney, as he was going north by the evening mail train and the family had been invited out to Curl-Curl surfing for the day.

They went from Sydney to Mosman by ferry and then by taxi with some heavy luggage to Balmoral. They were armed with coconut oil and face-cream, and their new bathing costumes. Michael had told Peter that all surfers use oil to give themselves a good brown colour and to prevent blistering, and he had with difficulty been persuaded to wait until they reached the beach before anointing himself all over with it. He continued to rejoice in his shorts, pointing out how nice and brown his knees were already.

Mrs Newsome had brought a large cake, some fruit, cold tongue, and salad-cream as their contribution to the picnic, so that they were 'all set'. They turned in at the gate soon after ten and once more were welcomed into the wild garden overlooking the sea. Michael was ironing his shorts, Helen cutting bread and butter, while her mother packed the thermos-flasks of tea and iced lemon-drinks. Mrs Mac, as the children began to call her, told Mrs Newsome she must keep Michael and Helen up to making their own beds, doing much of their own pressing, and making themselves generally useful in the house—not to mention taking a fair share of the washing-up. 'I don't want them spoilt,' she said in reply to a surprised look from Peter, 'and no doubt you'll soon be doing your own chores, too.'

Somehow they all packed into the car, including the baskets and Snip the dog, who liked to hang his head out of the window and watch the world go by. Helen came, buttoning up her

## DUCKING AND DUMPING IN THE SURF

freshly-ironed frock as she ran out, then rushing back for a forgotten towel and sun-glasses. Mr MacNamara had been patiently smoking his pipe, and when everyone was in he strolled over.

'Phew! that was a rush. What's the time? Only just eleven. Thank goodness we can take it easy for the rest of the day,' exclaimed Helen, fanning herself with the newspaper, whilst Mike begged his father to 'step on it' as they wanted to have a surf before lunch, and Curl-Curl is beyond Manly. 'Glued your hair on, Anne?' he asked.

'Why my hair specially?'

'Oh, nothing. I just wondered. We're surfing, not paddling, to-day.'

Anne said she had a strong rubber helmet bathing-cap if that was what he meant.

'They're terrible leg-pullers. Don't let them put it over you,' said Michael's father, as he turned to tell Mrs Newsome that they were now on the Spit road, which would take them over a bridge by a long road to Manly, and so on to Curl-Curl. 'We wanted to show you the beginning of the stretch of water we call Middle Harbour, which runs away up the North Shore.'

'How *lovely* it is, and what a beautiful road, sloping down to the water there where all the little craft are lying!' she exclaimed. A foam of green bush and gardens surrounded the shore.

'Yes, it is, isn't it?' agreed Helen, who was looking at her own country with different eyes since her return from England.

'Yes, anywhere else, on the Continent or in the States, it would be world-famous,' said Mrs Newsome.

'We're quite conceited about it all, really, you know,' said Mr MacNamara, 'but we don't tell the rest of the world enough about our special beauty spots. We just go round vaguely saying, "Oh, we have better scenery than that in Australia", and everyone thinks we're skiting. Of course, it's an undeniable fact that we haven't got a long history—not so long or so romantic as that of Canada or the States, where there were wars with the French and the Red Indians.'

They crossed Spit Bridge, and the road swept up where new houses and gardens amongst the half-wild bush, up past Seaforth

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

until they came to the outskirts of Manly; then before going on by the coast road to Curl Curl, Mr MacNamara turned and drove through Manly. The talk switched to Mr Jellick and Jimmy.

'Mummy, when shall we see Tufty again?' wondered Anne.

Her mother said they would certainly ask him over as soon as they were settled. The talk turned to the voyage and the differences between England and Australia. They came to the rather unsatisfactory conclusion that you can't say 'The English are like this,' or 'Australians do, or don't do, that,' because there are so many different kinds of people in the two countries.

They had reached Manly esplanade, where the visitors were duly impressed, not only by the immense stretch of golden sandy beach and the tall Norfolk Island pines along its whole length, but with the crash and surge of the green curling breakers that came rolling and towering in, crested with white plumes of spray, the curl edged with foam long before it broke with a roar and rushed up the beach. The paved promenade that ran along beside the stone beach-wall was crowded with boys and girls, men and women, in bathing costumes and bright beach towels or smart light clothes. Mrs Newsome and Anne noticed the large hats, gay, coloured sandals, and the sun-browned skins.

Facing the sea were hotels and tall blocks of flats, whilst rambling old brick houses looked down from the cliff-roads and gardens above. Before turning back to the road to Curl-Curl, they were taken past the Manly Surf Club and the modern surfing pavilion which, with its three-storied balconies and dressing-rooms and its flat roof for sunbaking, looked rather like an ultra-modern block of flats. Michael and Helen pointed out the high conning-tower on the Surf Club whose members were already on their Saturday duty-roster, sitting and lying about inside the enclosure, on the alert for a call from a swimmer in difficulties, or a shark alarm.

'What's the conning-tower for?' asked Peter.

'To spot sharks, of course,' said Helen and Michael together.

'We're always hearing about those sharks,' said Mrs Newsome.

'Do they really come right in to the beach?'

## DUCKING AND DUMPING IN THE SURF

'Oh, yes, unfortunately. There's a shark-bell—see it?—in the conning-tower. They ring it if the chap on duty up there spots one,' said Michael.

'What happens then?'

'Everyone beats it for the beach—the sea is empty in a few seconds,' Mr MacNamara reassured her. 'They are a menace, but comparatively few accidents happen, about one or two a year. They don't come close inshore till January or February, which is the breeding-season. Before the war there used to be aeroplanes over some beaches spotting them.'

'Can't anything be done to stop them?' asked Mrs Newsome.

'Look at the length of the coastline. They tried a shark-proof net of heavy wire at Coogee, and people complained that it spoilt the surf! You just don't think of sharks when you're in.'

'You should never allow the children to swim on a lonely beach where there are no life-savers about, and you must always keep between the flags put up—they mark where it's safe to bathe,' said Mrs MacNamara.

'Why, does the beach change?'

'Yes, often. I've known a whole shelf of the beach to drop away at Manly after a night's storm. One minute you're up to your ankles, and the next, where it was shallow the day before, you might drop out of your depth.'

Mr MacNamara joined in, and his voice was serious. 'Yes, before you go in, boys, you must always look to see where the red flags are. Mike, you know that.'

'Yes, Dad,' said Michael soberly.

'Another thing—and it's the law of the Medes and Persians—never, never must anyone dive into Middle Harbour, the Lane Cove, or Parramatta River from a boat in midstream. Up and down the banks you'll see strongly-wired bathing enclosures, or proper private bathing pools. These are O.K. They're shark-proof. But it just is not safe to dive in anywhere, because the brutes have been coming up the rivers from the sea lately.'

'It's a shame,' said Helen. 'The water looks so lovely on a hot day.'

'Well, don't you ever let me hear of any of you going in off

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

the boat, or you'll never be allowed out again,' said Mrs MacNamara. They all promised. 'It sounds as though surfing was full of risks, but it isn't, you know. You have only to keep to a few rules, like flags, and putting oil on your skin, and exposing yourself gradually so as not to blister. I'm afraid there's one other thing we'd better tell you about.'

'What, Mum?' asked Michael.

'Bluebottles,' said his mother. 'I put some peroxide and ammonia in the basket, just in case. And I've brought some oil and peroxide for sunburn.'

'Oh, Mummy, you are a spoil-sport. We weren't going to tell them,' said Helen mischievously.

'That's naughty of you, Helen. It would spoil the whole day if anyone were stung.'

'Helen, I'm surprised at you,' said Michael. Helen hung her head.

'A bluebottle is only a big fly, isn't it?' said Anne. 'A kind of blowfly?'

'Well, there's another kind, too,' said Mr MacNamara.

'If you see a transparent little thing about six inches long, like thin blown glass, washed up on the beach or floating in the sea, keep well away,' Mrs MacNamara went on. 'It has a long pear-shaped bladder full of air, which acts as a float and lies horizontally on the water. It's pointed at both ends and seems even to have a little sail, which is generally a brilliant peacock blue. Things that look like a small bunch of grapes trail behind, and it's these that have tentacles stiff with batteries of stinging cells. The bluebottle looks like a Venetian glass bottle. In Europe they're called Portuguese men-o'-war.'

'What does it do?' asked Mr Newsome.

'One touch from those tentacles, and you think you've had an electric shock; at least you have all the symptoms of it. Wherever the tentacles touched you will sting painfully. You get headache and vomiting. You look as though [you'd had a large burn.'

'What an awful thing,' exclaimed Mrs Newsome. 'What's the best thing to do for it?'

'Well, you have to get a doctor generally, but good first-aid

## DUCKING AND DUMPING IN THE SURF

is to rub the place hard with wet or dry sand, and dab on Condyl's fluid or ammonia as quickly as possible—even soda will do.'

'I've seen a chap who was stung. He was quite ill and swelled up. He had to have the doctor, but was well in a week,' said Michael.

All this time they had been running between tawny beaches, summer shacks and large modern houses. The green breakers came curling in with a thunderous roar. Already early Saturday bathers were on the beaches. They skirted the reed-encircled Narrabeen lakes and at last reached Curl-Curl. Here it was much more primitive than at Manly; no esplanade, no three-storied surfing-pavilion, but wooden sheds with rows of curtained cubicles running down each inside wall. The usual freshwater showers, taps, etc., completed the simple equipment. But to Anne and Peter it seemed the height of luxury.

'Wait until you go round the surfing pavilion at Manly, or the dressing-rooms at Balmoral where we live. Didn't you see them the other day?'

'No,' said Anne, 'I suppose I was too busy looking at all the other things.'

'We'll take you to see the ones at Bondi and Coogee,' said Michael. 'They're bigger than the pavilion at Manly. They've got ramps for cars, dozens of showers and things, and huge flat roofs for sunbathing.'

'They're too elaborate; quite spoil the idea of a surf for me,' said Mrs MacNamara.

They undressed and lay in the sun on the warm sand. Mrs MacNamara had a large gaily striped umbrella which they fixed up so that anyone who wanted to put head and shoulders in the shade could do so. They watched a boat coming in on the surf, filled with wet, brown athletes. Others were practising with surf-boards, but most people prefer to shoot the breakers without any such artificial aid. Helen and Michael soon danced out to breast the waves, leaping up and down. 'Come on,' they called to the other two. 'Come along.'

Mr MacNamara watched them with twinkling eyes and presently strolled over to the water's edge. 'They're up to some mischief,' he said.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

The waves kept rolling in, and Anne and Peter, after a glance behind, waded out through the thick foam as the next one loomed up. Alas, they faced it, and were both knocked backwards, twisted round like ninepins, and dragged feet first out to sea by the undertow. They picked themselves up, and found Mr MacNamara beside them as an enormous green roller towered above them. He took one hand of each, shouting, 'Never try to take one front on. That's right, Peter, jump with it—up. Take it sideways, or it'll knock you flat again.' And he showed them how. Helen and Michael were calling them to come out further. They waded out and joined the other two in the swell.

'Here's one,' called Michael, and took it before it curled over, his head appearing under the curl as he paddled violently and was swept right up the beach. Up he got and rushed back to take another. So absorbed was Peter watching that he didn't look behind. A wave hit him violently in the small of the back, he was rolled over, while a hand caught him by the shoulder and ducked him unmercifully, just as he came up. He heard Helen's laugh, and flung his arm round something soft. They both went under this time. Helen was up to her tricks, and while he was gasping for breath, another wave rolled him over like a ball, while Helen jumped clear and he saw her laughing at him.

This was not to be borne, and they had a good set-to. This time he came up from under a breaker between an irate stranger's legs, whose 'run in' he had completely spoilt. As he picked himself up yet again from the sand where he had been dumped he wondered whether he'd ever be able to manage as those other two did so easily. The stranger grinned at him as he shook the water out of his ears.

'Caught you, didn't it?' he said. 'You'll learn.' And he disappeared.

He and Anne were dumped again and again until they found Helen and Michael standing beside them, perfectly calm, and apparently enjoying themselves. Peter got up wrathfully, as the undertow once more dragged the sand from under his feet.

'You wretches. You've been enjoying yourselves watching us.'

'Come on, you've been dumped enough,' they said, though Helen still had the light of mischief in her eyes. She condescended

## DUCKING AND DUMPING IN THE SURF

to do as Michael told her, however, and they went out into the swell together where the MacNamaras gave the newcomers a lesson and a few tips on how *not* to come in. Then, hungry as only surfers and boys can be, they dried off on the sand and had lunch. After this everyone lay comatose, sunbaking for awhile, but soon the four were off exploring, finding strange shells or splashing each other until it was time for another dip. No one was allowed to bathe for a full hour after a meal for fear of tummy trouble. Then it was time to pack up, after some skylarking with towels and sand and seaweed, but they had to return in good time for Mr MacNamara to catch his train. Michael and Helen were going to see him off, the Newsomes returning to town by boat. As they said good-bye to Mr MacNamara, they felt that he was going to be one of their special friends.

Next week it was arranged that the family should go over to live at 'Jennalong,' as the house at Balmoral was called, for the next six months at least.

## *Chapter 8*

### SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN SYDNEY

A week later, a few days after the move to Balmoral, they all went to see Mrs MacNamara off at the Sydney Central Railway Station, which is as large, dirty, and ugly as most big railway stations of over sixty years old. Then they settled down to life at Jennalong.

Arrangements had been made for Anne to go to Redlands, the Cremorne school to which Helen went. It is a boarding-school affiliated to the Church of England Girls' Grammar School. But they couldn't take her until half-term, so for her first few weeks she was to go to the local State school. This, as her mother remarked, would be a great help in becoming used to Australian school ways, and in meeting other girls. She was going to Redlands for tennis, and to the Conservatorium of Music once a week for piano lessons, where she would also practise for an hour after her lesson. She looked forward to the little trip across the harbour with her mother every Wednesday. It meant an afternoon's outing, and perhaps tea in the Botanical Gardens in which the Conservatorium stands, or in the Conservatorium canteen itself.

Peter was going to Shore—more correctly North Shore Grammar School. Through the kindness of the head it had been possible for him to begin immediately, although the summer term had started. His father had made all arrangements before they left England, but whether he could be fitted in on arrival was doubtful until the last moment. However, as both he and Michael were to be day-boys for this first term and probably next as well, a place had been found for him and he sat for his entrance exam. that week.

Once they had begun lessons again, time flew by. It was half-term before they realized it, and Anne had changed over to Redlands. Each had some small household job to do, and they took it in turns to help with the evening washing-up. Each made

## SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN SYDNEY

his or her own bed every morning, and they were *supposed*, at any rate, to clean their own sandals or shoes. Often they ran down the cliff path for a swim before breakfast, and how delicious it was in the early freshness! As the days grew hotter they were glad of thin clothes and another dip or a shower after school if there was time. Then they had their homework, heat or no heat, over which they all groaned, as well as school sports, and an occasional tennis party with school friends. The hard courts give a fast game.

Once at Redlands, Anne soon found herself in the swing of things and she began to make friends. She loved the tennis afternoons at school; the plop, plop of the ball from racquet to racquet during a quick service, the call of 'Well played', or 'Poor old Sheila, bad luck', from the others sitting round under the pepper-trees—those sticky pepper-trees, with a smell like squashed ants, ferny bright leaves, and tiny coral berries the size of a pepper-corn, that drooped over the dull red courts. Every Australian child must have climbed one at some time, broken the twigs, and become sticky with the milky juice that drips out.

They played matches against other schools, and there were swimming lessons. Many of the girls were like fish in the water, but Anne was glad of some coaching in the Australian crawl and in diving. She was always on the spot for a competition, so that her swimming quickly improved. Both boys' and girls' schools compete for swimming records. For these important events there are several large baths round the harbour, with modern high-diving equipment, such as the Olympic Pool or Clifton Gardens Baths. By the middle of December Anne was able to announce proudly that she had won a race. All Sydney schools have life-saving instruction, and with a view to achieving his ambition and becoming a member of the Surf Life-Saving Club Association, though still far too young, Peter worked hard at swimming and the complicated rescue drill as set out in the Association's handbooks. The boys played the usual games at school; cricket, now in full swing, and football in the winter.

By November it was very hot. Cicadas, or as some Australian children call them, locusts, sang and screamed all day and far into the night. They are rather like a large beetle with beautiful

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

green metallic wings that have a coppery sheen. Peter, like most boys, became adept at catching them. With one hidden and silenced in the palm of his hand, he would come and release it to scream in Anne's or Sarah's ear. At which Sarah would threaten him with the broomstick, telling him to take himself and his cricket off or she'd 'lambast the breeches off of him'.

'As a matter of fact, they aren't either crickets *or* locusts at all,' Peter would tell her, airing his newly acquired natural history. 'Locusts are *really* more like grasshoppers; these things are cicadas, Sarah.'

'Are they rarely, now?' Sarah would ask, mimicking his English accent (about which he was also teased at school), adding that they were the sign of another hot day, that's all she knew.

They all found the heat trying; they'd never felt such real heat in their lives, and soon came to look forward to Sydney's 'southerly buster', the wind that almost always blows up from the sea at the end of a really insufferably hot day. Mrs Newsome remarked that after feeling so sticky she now understood why all Australians she had met at home were so fond of baths, and so shocked at extra charges for them and restrictions on having them! As for Anne and Peter they were in and out of the sea or under the shower three times a day, until the others pointed out that if the summer should be *really* dry, Sydney like other parts of the country would be short of water. So they had to economize on showers, and go down to the sea.

They found they were expected to work hard in spite of the heat, though their father and mother allowed them to enjoy themselves out of doors as long as they got their prep. *almost* finished. It would do neither of them any harm to run wild a little whilst becoming used to new conditions and the Australian summer, they thought. On many of these long, hot days it seemed to the two English children a shame to be inside at all, much less to be doing lessons; the enchantment of sun and sea, the drowsy heat, and sparkle of the air, weren't helpful to study. They remembered the long, dark autumn and winter evenings of this time last year at home, and the icy cold. They were astonished to find that, as the summer wore on, the days didn't get much



*The Australian News and Information Bureau*

*Surfing on Manly Beach, an immense stretch of golden sand fringed with tall Norfolk Island Pines.*



*The Agent General for N.S.W.*



*The Australian News and Information Bureau*

*A lovely bit of the Hawkesbury River (ABOVE) and (BELOW) one of the many bridges of Brisbane, capital of the sub-tropical State of Queensland. The tree with the curiously-shaped leaves is a poinsettia, which later will have dark-red flowers*

## SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN SYDNEY

longer; there is no twilight. The morning sun woke them earlier, and was so hot that Peter and Michael had to move their beds to a veranda which didn't face east, or they would have been woken too early by the sun and the birds.

Peter was to begin working at once for his leaving certificate examination the following year. If he passed he would take Honours at the next exam, and having done certain basic subjects, would automatically matriculate for the university.

There were some things they both missed, such as the various weekly or fortnightly concerts they went to at home, and the pleasant 'musical appreciation' lessons at school, the kind of music given in the Children's Hour, and the many winter and summer concert seasons held in England. But, as their mother pointed out, it must be remembered that Australia's much smaller population is scattered over great distances, and is far from the great European centres of music. The distance from Brisbane in Queensland to Launceston in Tasmania is almost as far as from London to Constantinople.

When Mrs Newsome was talking to Anne's headmistress about music, she learnt that though musical appreciation is not a subject included in the syllabus of the Education Department of N.S.W., there are frequent programmes of music and occasional music talks in the Children's Session of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (usually spoken of as the A.B.C. or the National Wavelength because it covers the whole continent). For years the A.B.C. has given public orchestral concerts all over Australia for children, and these are broadcast. Some schools run their own orchestras; others join in the Schools' Broadcast Music Sessions. Visiting orchestras or conductors touring the continent now give concerts not only in the six capital cities alone, but in many larger country towns, such as Toowoomba in Queensland, Ballarat and Bendigo (Victoria), Armidale or Maitland (N.S.W.) and Canberra, in the Australian Capital Territory, and at least one special children's concert is almost always given by the visitors in each town. In Queensland the Government has recently subsidized a string quartet specially to tour that vast State, playing only to schools, large and small.

Helen and Michael did their best to explain the intricacies of

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Australian radio to the Newsomes. The many different wavelengths and stations in each State make it rather confusing. In addition to the A.B.C., there are inter-State and regional stations, owing to the size of the country. There are also several commercial stations in each State which link up with each other, or form a special group. Not only do these relay each other's programmes, but frequently A.B.C. programmes and news also, as well as regional flood, cyclone, or bush-fire warnings. Whilst these commercial stations exist to advertise goods, they also put on programmes of serious music and plays; the Palm Olive orchestra, for instance, might play classical music, there is the Lux Radio series of plays, and so on. Generally speaking, however, they correspond to the B.B.C. Light Programme. They have their own special numbers and initials for each State. It will be seen what a blessing wireless is to lonely people in the bush or isolated districts and bush schools four or five hundred miles from the nearest city. Helen and her small brother and sister had all learnt their first lessons from the kindergarten on the air, under the trees in their garden.

The Children's Session of the A.B.C. comes on at about the same time as the B.B.C. Children's Hour, and the four young people often listened. Michael belonged to the Argonauts, a club for boys and girls interested in various subjects such as natural history, music, poetry, painting, and adventure stories. At school, Anne's class listened to the schools broadcast on current affairs. Their mother told them that they couldn't expect to find as many concerts and exhibitions and picture galleries as in London or the old cities and even in the smaller towns of Great Britain.

'Neither shall we see galleries full of the great works of Italian, Spanish, and French masters here in Sydney, as we would in London or Paris,' she warned them. 'I'm told there are lots of reproductions.' This is true, and in Australia it is rare to find early masterpieces, or the work of painters such as Corot, except in the Melbourne Art Gallery.

Nor is there anything in Sydney to compare with the great Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where Anne and Peter had been taken in school holidays or during term to some special exhibition or to study period clothes or furniture for their

## SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN SYDNEY

history. Though there are, of course, none of the small local folk-museums, which are scattered up and down the old towns of England and Scotland, some Australian towns have begun to collect letters and relics of early pioneering days, on which there is a large literature in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, as well as in other capital cities. Later, both Anne and Peter heard of the Royal Australian Historical Society to their cost, for they had to dig up information from its journal for school essays.

During term, both Anne's and Peter's classes were taken to see the collection of Greek vases at the Nicholson Museum of the University of Sydney in connection with their lessons on ancient history. Peter's class was booked for a visit next term to the National Standard Laboratory and Sydney Technical College Museum. They were both also booked for a school visit to the Mitchell Library, that great storehouse of Australian history, manuscripts, and pictures. Here they would see such treasures as James Burney's journal, Flinders's cocked hat and sword, early maps of the Pacific Ocean before Australia was known, the log that Bligh kept during the famous voyage in the open boat after the mutiny of the *Bounty*, with a dark splash which *might* be blood upon it, and still more interesting, some pages in Cook's own handwriting. There, too, are photostat copies of the journal he kept on board the *Endeavour*, the ship in which Botany Bay was discovered. This journal is now in the National Library at Canberra.

You may like to know something about the different kinds of schools in Australia. Peter and Anne found the subjects very much like those they had been used to at home: English, Latin, maths, French, Greek if you wanted to do it, physics, botany, geography, and so on. In some subjects the two English children were ahead; in others, such as geography, they were behind.

In each of the six Australian States there is free schooling, paid for by the Government. The Department of Education in each State runs the State or public schools, which are free for children up to the age of fourteen. There are Government high schools (or secondary schools) for children over fourteen who are continuing their studies in all large country centres as well as in the capital cities. They usually charge a small fee. There

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

are several different kinds of high school, such as trade, country technical schools, agricultural high schools, ordinary high schools, and so on.

All secondary schools, whether State or private, are compelled to follow the courses and pass the exams set by the Education Department of the State. There are three exams in most States: the qualifying certificate, the intermediate certificate, and the leaving certificate. South Australia has recently abolished the qualifying. In some States the school-leaving age is fifteen. There are many private day and boarding secondary schools, such as those Helen and Michael attended; these may add any subjects they like to the Education Department's syllabus and this they often do. Generally, however, there is much less variety in Australian education than in English. Local governments have nothing to do with it, and there are no council or county schools.

On the whole, Anne and Peter found their schools to be not so very different from an English one. Perhaps the greatest difference is the absence of a *consciousness* of any class difference amongst people and boys and girls in all walks of life. For although differences exist and always will as long as there are people in the world, they aren't made so much of in Australia; there people have to depend on themselves. This attitude colours the whole Australian way of life which, although it has a British foundation, has already an individuality of its own. The branches are different, though they stem from the same parent tree.

The other great differences are the climate, the general open-air life, the long summer holidays at Christmas-time, and the more utilitarian attitude to work generally. Mrs Newsome failed to find any mention in the syllabus of drawing or the history of art.

The expression 'grammar school' hasn't the same meaning as it has in England. It is often applied to an expensive private boarding-school run on English public school lines. Such are the Geelong Grammar School, North Shore Grammar School, and many others. They take both boarders and day-pupils. Australian parents prefer their children to attend day-schools if possible. It is the children from outback stations or distant inland districts who are more often sent to boarding-school, though nowadays

## SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN SYDNEY

much is done at home by the excellent State correspondence lessons, the kindergarten-on-the-air, school broadcasts, etc. Private tutors or governesses sometimes teach a small group of children in the outback, using these aids.

After all this explanation we return to Mr and Mrs Newsome, Helen, Peter, and Anne, sitting on the veranda one summer evening early in December and being bitten by mosquitoes, whilst the night insects cluster round the electric light. Peter and Anne have finished their prep.; the cicadas are still shrilling in the garden though it is dark.

'Those creatures give me quite a headache; they go on the whole day long,' exclaimed Mrs Newsome. She and her husband were looking through the syllabus and courses of study for secondary and high schools issued by the Education Department of N.S.W., with lists of books suggested for teachers and pupils to read. The syllabus was used both by Anne's and Peter's schools, with slight additions and changes.

'“Modern history,”' read Mrs Newsome aloud. 'For the first three years of this course, Peter, you are to “make a preliminary survey of ancient world history, up to 1453. It is to be dealt with in story form, not as ancient history in the old narrow sense of the word.”'

Mr Newsome stirred and took his pipe out of his mouth. '“Old narrow sense.” Rubbish. What else?'

'“The framers of the syllabus desire to encourage elasticity, and to leave quite a lot to the headmaster or the class-teacher's own ideas.”'

Peter said he had missed some of the British Empire history, so he had to do extra work to get it up.

No special periods were set for literature. The notes to teachers, Mrs Newsome thought, were good. 'They say the aim is to encourage wide reading of poetry and the novel. “The main aim will be to arouse pleasure and interest and by the end of the fifth year it is expected that pupils will have some orderly idea of the leading writers and some acquaintance with them.” Here you are, dear.' She passed the book across.

'“Handbooks of literature, though useful, will be of quite secondary importance,”' Mr Newsome read. 'That's a good

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

point; let them go to the thing itself. It's better than studying texts and sources. You can do Japanese if you like, Peter.'

'Why?'

'As Australia has so recently been threatened by Japan, the language is included in her high school choice of subjects.'

Suddenly Anne gave a snort of annoyance. 'Oh, aren't these mosquitoes awful? I'm a mass of bites, and never catch them. Ah, gotcher.'

'You poor things, you're eaten alive,' said Helen. 'You've got nice fresh English blood, you see; they don't bother Mike and me so much. There must be some old mosquito-nets about. I'll go and see.' There was a short silence, during which the buzz of thousands of mosquitoes could be clearly heard.

'How about children's libraries here, Helen? Do you belong to one?' asked Mrs Newsome, when she returned with the net. 'Where do you get your books from?'

'Well, I always use the school library. There is a children's library at Mosman, I think. I don't get much time for reading,' she added.

'No, I certainly haven't noticed you with your nose in a book at all,' answered Mrs Newsome.

'Well, do you think it's so important?' asked Helen. 'I always have so much to do.'

'Oh, it's most important, Helen. It's such fun discovering new things in books, and it's the reading you do for yourselves that matters far more than what people tell you to read. We must go and see this children's library at Mosman. What about taking us next Saturday?'

'Oh, we're playing tennis with the Morecombes,' said Helen in a disappointed tone.

'You'll have time before we go, in the morning,' said Michael. 'Go on, Helen, don't be silly.'

Mr Newsome looked up. 'You know, Helen, in all the large towns in England there are many very good free libraries for children, run by the local councils. The libraries are often specially equipped with little tables and chairs, low shelves, and all kinds of books for loan.'

Michael came outside.

## SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN SYDNEY

'Our local authorities mostly see to things like roads and drains and water-supplies. I think I heard Dad say that lately they're beginning to be interested in libraries in country towns, but I know there's not one in any town near us up at the station.'

Just then there was a sound like a huge pencil squeaking on the roof, which set everyone's teeth on edge. Glad to get away from mosquitoes, the syllabus, and homework, they all stopped to listen.

'Sounds like a possum,' said Helen. 'Their claws make that noise on the roof of the garage when they slide down it from the gum-tree. It's corrugated iron at one end.'

'I expect that's Samson. First time I've heard him this summer,' said Michael. 'Let's sneak out and have a look from the front.'

They all tiptoed out after him. In the garden, near the garage, they peered through the darkness, afraid to move.

'There he is,' whispered Michael as he caught Snip by the collar.

They could just see a small, furry animal, with a long, bushy tail, black against the skyline as he turned his head. One bright eye gleamed near his little black nose. Snip growled, and the possum scuttled off the roof, slithering and squeaking as he went. He was up the gum-tree near the garage in a flash, and they saw him curl his tail round a branch and sit there looking at them.

Anne was delighted. 'Look at him, look at his tail, the way he's wrapped it round the branch.'

Helen asked if there was any milk to spare. 'We might as well put some out or he'll only come and steal it, and probably make an awful noise in the middle of the night knocking things over.'

Mrs Newsome said, yes, she could put a saucer out, and Helen ran off to get it. 'I keep most things in the frig. We can't keep the pantry window shut this weather and the flies are so bad,' she added.

'There should be some wire gauze over that window, Mike,' said Helen. 'Mum asked you to put a piece up last year to keep the flies and possums out.'

'I'm distracted with the blowflies. If you can do something to keep them out I'll be delighted,' exclaimed Mrs Newsome.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

'I'll put that gauze over the window to-morrow, Mrs Newsome,' promised Michael, 'and I'll start on a wire door for the pantry. Peter and I can work on it at school.'

'That would be grand, Michael.'

Next Saturday morning Mrs Newsome saw to it that her brood was ready early, and she armed them with string bags and baskets so that they could help carry some of the week-end shopping. She prevented them from going down to the sea by promising that they could take their lunch to the beach, and they set off for the Mosman Children's Library. Michael stayed behind to keep an eye on things and to fix the pantry window.

The tram conductor put them down near an old-fashioned two-storied house, with a veranda and an upstairs balcony running round three sides, painted white and blue and set back in a garden.

'This is it,' said Helen, opening the gate.

'It looks like a private house, not a library,' said Mrs Newsome.

'Helen, why didn't you bring us here before? It's lovely,' exclaimed Anne.

They found themselves in a large, cool room shaded from the heat by cream-coloured shutters. Books lined the walls, bowls of bright flowers stood here and there on desk and table. There was quite a crowd although it was only ten o'clock; children with surf-towels round their necks, boys and girls, fathers in shirt-sleeves. The assistant took them over to the desk in the circulating department and gave them each a simple enrolment form to fill in. They found that the only charge would be a fine of one penny a week for overdue books.

'I've never seen a children's library like this,' said Anne as they stood on the veranda overlooking the garden where a girl sat reading. 'How lovely—can we come here and just read to see if we like the books?' They were told, yes, they could. There were low cream shelves and chairs for quiet reading. There used to be a room for music and lectures.

'How many rooms are there?' asked Peter.

'Two for the children's library; the long room across the passage with reading alcoves is for the grown-ups' library. We've had to give up our stamp club and chess class.'

## SUMMER SCHOOLDAYS IN. SYDNEY

Helen stood by, her hat dangling on her arm. She hadn't ever bothered about books, but now when she saw how interested these two were, she felt a little out of it.

'Who pays for it all?' asked Mrs Newsome.

'The Mosman Council and the ratepayers,' answered the assistant. 'There are quite a number of children's libraries in Sydney now; we expect there will be more soon. Here's Miss Thomas, the chief librarian, she'll tell you more about it.'

Miss Thomas explained how she herself had started the library as a private effort with three members in a garden studio and a few books she had gathered together. It had grown so much that at length the Mosman Municipal Council had provided her with this house and taken the library over as a running concern.

So the Mosman Library became part of the Newsome family life. Even Helen joined when she found she could get books on how to improve her stroke at tennis, or something about horses; Michael condescended to join as well, and found not only the Life of Matthew Flinders, but of George Bass RN, whilst Anne swung up the garden path regularly and her mother joined the Adult Library.

## *Chapter 9*

### LETTERS FROM BRISBANE

Time went on. Mr Newsome left for a long business visit to Brisbane via the north coast of N.S.W., stopping at Armidale and elsewhere on the way. Annual exams were in sight, and the Christmas breaking-up, and summer holidays. Peter and Michael had school sports and prize day to look forward to; Peter was to go to Tuggerah Lakes for a week's camp with the school scout troop after Christmas.

Helen and Anne were working at the annual school play, which was to be preceded by a ballet performed by members of the ballet class. The performance was to be in the school grounds.

An invitation had come from Mrs MacNamara for the whole tribe to go 'up north' to the station for Christmas, but Mrs Newsome had refused this as they were all keen on a surfing-and-beach Christmas in Sydney. So it had been arranged that she and the two children should go up later, about the second week in January.

One morning as they were having breakfast—'How would you like to have Tufty to stay with us for Christmas?' asked their mother. 'He says he'd like to come, and would arrange that rowing expedition up Middle Harbour on Christmas night by moonlight.'

Anne and Peter were delighted with this idea, especially as they'd seen Tufty only once or twice since school began.

As Christmas drew nearer, Peter and Michael became very busy in the tool-shed behind the garage, where Michael had a small lathe and carpenter's bench, and after having coped successfully with the wire gauze door for the pantry they were inspired to further efforts. One afternoon Mrs Newsome found Anne and Helen on one of the verandas sitting at a table which was covered with pieces of leather, coloured paper and other odds and ends which they hastily concealed as she approached.

## LETTERS FROM BRISBANE

'We thought you'd gone out for the afternoon and wouldn't be back till late,' they chorused. 'You said you wouldn't be in till after the five o'clock boat.'

'Yes, so I did, but what of it? What are all these pretty things? And who's going to get me a cup of tea?'

'I'll get it,' said Helen, jumping up, while Anne said, 'Mummy, it's nearly Christmas. Surely you know you shouldn't ask questions at Christmas-time about *anything* at all.'

'How silly of me to forget, darling. Well, we'll stir those puddings to-morrow, so as to make sure that Helen has her turn before she goes off. When do the holidays start?'

'We break up on December 22nd,' said Helen, coming out with the tea. 'I say, you are sweet, Mrs Newsome. It's like being at home being with you and Anne. I love stirring puddings.'

\* \* \*

At school they continued to work as hard as ever in spite of the heat and approach of holidays. It was therefore a considerable blow one evening when they turned on the electric switch and no light came. There was a strike on! There was no prep. that evening; no street lights; no 'frig in the frigidaire', as Helen said. Fortunately they cooked by gas. Anne felt Australia had let her down badly.

'But, Mummy, I didn't think we'd have gas or electric cuts and things in *Sydney*. I thought it was only in England we had them.'

'This isn't a cut, it's a strike. Australia has her troubles, too, it seems. Lucky it's so hot,' answered her mother.

Candles were dug out of a cupboard by Helen, but they were a sad sight for they drooped, being already soft with the heat. Even the one street light near their path was out. Few of the scattered suburbs of Sydney are as brightly lit as London or large English cities, though the city streets, and the inner suburbs round King's Cross and Darling Point, are as brilliantly lit as any city. However, the strike was over in a few days.

Nearly a week after he had gone north, Anne and Peter had a long letter from their father. He was very good at letters. He always told them the sort of things they wanted to know about

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

a place, and some funny stories as well. This one was well up to standard.

They were compiling an Australian scrap-book which took in everything from stamps and cricket to flying records and trains, swimming events and bits of poetry, a picture of the strange grey boulders of the Warrumbungle Ranges, the far-off MacDonnells, a plane landing at Darwin, or a description of the Burrinjuck dam. From the other side of the State their father had now sent them some country newspapers. They were having breakfast in the garden under the pittosporum-tree one morning when they heard the postman's whistle as he pushed the mail into the letter-box on the gate.

'Oh, goodness, Mummy, there's pages of it,' cried Anne.

'I'll keep it for you till this afternoon, darling. You'll be late for school,' said her mother.

'Oh, bother school,' they said together, poring over it.

'He says the Hawkesbury River is like Killarney only not such a bright green.'

'It has high hills and great bluffs where it twists about.'

'He says the scenery along the river and up the coast is gorgeous in places; mountains and rivers and deep railway cuttings.'

'He says the trains get filthy with dust and coal-black.'

'Oh, he's seen masses of hyacinths growing *wild*; they're a pest up on the Clarence River and people are always rooting them out. Mummy, fancy a river blocked with hyacinths!'

'He says the country towns are mostly hideous.'

'He says you pass hundreds of miles of flat country with dead trees standing up.'

'Look, you really must go, children. Peter—Michael's gone.'

'I'm too hot to hurry,' said Peter, dawdling. 'I've got a headache.'

'You must wear your sun-glasses then. Put them on. Here they are.'

'The boys laugh and call me sissy,' he mumbled.

'Well, you tell them they'd be wearing far more clothes than you ever thought necessary if they were in England for the winter. Wear them till you get to school, at any rate.'

And the letter had to wait till the evening.

## LETTERS FROM BRISBANE

My dear Fidget and Fudget [their father wrote],

Here I am at Brisbane, where I shall jot down a few lines whenever I have time. If Queensland trains are all like the one I took from Southport to Brisbane, I don't relish the idea of doing the thousand miles up to Cooktown. But I've had a most enjoyable time. I stopped at Newcastle where I spent the day and had a good look at the great steel works there. The train left in the evening, and as we steamed away the furnaces looked like huge burning mountains in the distance. Then I spent another day and a night at Tamworth, and from there dodged up to Murwillumbah, Grafton, and drove across the New England Ranges to Armidale before dashing off to Murwillumbah to continue the journey up to Brisbane. I'll begin with Tamworth.

As you know, there's a place in England called Tamworth, and this town is named after it. It's on the flat banks of the Peel River, part of the town on one side, part on the other. Every now and again the river overflows, they tell me, and as it comes down with a rush many shops in the main street are flooded out. To me it seemed pretty hot, but I was told to wait for real heat further north. How right they were! It's a fairly large town nestling against hills called the Moonbi Ranges. I saw lucerne growing on what they call the flats. It's wonderful for dairy cattle and produces two or three crops a year. I was taken for a drive out to the ranges by one of the very hospitable people I met. We looked for miles across the Peel River Valley—a magnificent sight. Among the hills we could see the wattle-trees in bloom still, and there were wild clematis and maidenhair and a lot of small heathlike wild flowers. We were 285 miles from Sydney, on the direct New England Highway, and I could have gone straight up to Armidale by service-car, but preferred to branch off and go by the north-coast route. So we rocketed our way up north—very hot. At first, miles of monotonous country, burnt brown grass (the prevailing summer colour), scattered ragged gum-trees with the bark peeling in strips; or terrible stretches of ring-barked country, where the trees have been killed deliberately and left to stand and drop.<sup>1</sup> I had a comfortable sleeper but we got very dusty. I won't bore you with descriptions of scenery—the brown grass, the white skeletons of ring-barked trees—until we came to the coastal ranges. I must say (though I wouldn't advise you to go about quoting me to your friends) that it seems dreadful in a country where shade and rain are so much needed that millions of trees should have been destroyed in the past. They say that there used

<sup>1</sup> A ring of bark, 6-8 in. deep, is cut away from the base of the trunk. This prevents the sap from rising and after some months the tree dies where it stands. Ring-barking was common until twenty years ago. It was thought that the trees took the nourishment from the soil, and so prevented grass growing for the sheep and cattle; ring-barking was a quick and easy way of 'clearing' forest-covered land. Whole hillsides were denuded, and this has caused erosion, the soil blowing away in some areas. Trees are now being planted.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

to be the most wonderful red 'cedar-wood' lower down the coast near Newcastle, but it was all cut out and used, and never replanted. I notice young plantations of various trees about. You can look up the names of the Minister for Erosion in both New South Wales and Victoria for your cuttings book!

You'll be interested to know, Peter, that N.S.W. has the standard international gauge of 4 ft 8½ in. but that Queensland and Western Australia have the narrowest one—3 ft 6 in. And *how* it rocks!

I kept to the coastal route as far as Grafton. Feeling very gritty and with a powerful thirst, I wasn't sorry to reach Brisbane yesterday. Must stop now as it's time for breakfast.

LATER. Up here in Brisbane you feel as though you were in the tropics far more than you do in Sydney. It's a leisurely place, very friendly, but too hot for a newcomer like me. I like it a lot, even though I'm dripping with sweat. Everyone speaks more slowly than down south, no one hurries, and there's an extraordinary feeling of size and space about; a natural thing in a land of such distances. You could get England, France, Portugal, Italy, and Spain into Queensland, if that's of any interest to you.

The Brisbane River—named after an early governor of N.S.W.—winds for fifteen miles from the sea to the city, and then passes right through it, so that, as with all the Australian capitals, you're never out of the sight of water for long. Gardens filled with tropical shrubs and flowers line the riverside, and the three bridges are pleasant to cross. Palm-trees add to the effect. Bamboos, hibiscus, all kinds of bright flowers stand out against the white stone and the running river. Most of the houses—there aren't many blocks of flats—are mounted on stilts, leaving a large space between the floor of the house and the ground underneath. This is to keep the white ants from eating the floors, and the stilts are specially treated to keep the pests away. Underneath the house it's cooler, and they often have a fernery or bush-house there, with a few lounge chairs and a hammock. There is even a laundry under the back part of the house, and in some of the older ones there's room for the garage too. Even in winter the temperature is seldom below fifty-eight degrees, so you can guess what summer is! I'm sure you could make jam in the sun to-day, tell Mother.

I went out to have a look at the finest view of the city and river late yesterday afternoon, from Mount Coo-tha.

You'll never guess what else I've seen growing! Bananas, pineapples, and pawpaws—the last that luscious yellowy kind of fruit that you don't like, Anne. They grow on quite a tall tree. One kind has seeds, the other has none, and I'm told that one won't grow without the other nearby.

I didn't tell you about Grafton. I was delighted with it—it's one of the

## LETTERS FROM BRISBANE

prettiest country towns I've seen so far. The others leave much to be desired. Most of them are a sea of corrugated-iron roofs and ugly one-story houses. Most private houses in Tamworth have gardens. I saw thick lawns with roses, arum lilies, gladioli, and wistaria. Grafton streets are lined with trees, the beautiful shady jacarandas, just now covered with soft blue-mauve flowers which fill the air with scent. There are other trees, too, and flowers. The wide Clarence River dominates the town. It's a great dairy-farming district, and I'd have loved a trip on one of the little ferry-boats—a service boat that runs up the river picking up milk-cans and throwing out parcels of meat, mails, and the daily papers. It's a good season and I saw more fat cows. The maize with its long bright leaves shaped like swords, and its silky green beards surrounding the yellow cob, is a feature of the landscape.

Grafton is proud of its early pioneers, and has a good little museum and collection of old letters, pictures, maps, and relics of the early explorers and pioneers. I was shown some of them at a party given for me. I like the houses here—they are the long old bungalow type with deep wooden verandas, screened by blinds, creepers, or grape vines.

I've heard a great deal about the Clarence River hydro-electric scheme, for which Sir Earle Page works so hard. I'm sending you a booklet about it, with pictures for your collection. All these towns are lit by electricity, though some other arrangements are a bit primitive. I hope your strike is over. We had a terrific thunderstorm the other night—a magnificent sight; the thunder went on growling for hours. The lightning upset the wireless.

From Grafton I went over a hundred miles by car along the Gwydir Highway to Glen Innes, a town in the heart of the New England Ranges. It has many English trees which must be lovely in the autumn, and is much cooler than the coast. They often have snow there, but never such heavy falls as at Kosciuscko down south. From there I went back to Armidale, round hair-pin bends above deep gorges, through tall forest country. The scenery is simply magnificent. There were immensely tall trees of 'Christmas bush' sarsaparilla and mountain gums. On the run through the ranges to Grafton we saw wild oranges growing near a river, probably planted originally by some early explorer, and the native wild cherry with its stone outside instead of in! There were lots of parrots and birds that Anne would love, and fishing. There are boarding-schools for boys and girls at Armidale—a very healthy spot—as well as a university college.

I went from Grafton via Murwillumbah to Southport, Queensland, by car. The border town between the two States is a desolate-looking place. All the way from the northern rivers of N.S.W. to Queensland we went through pineapple and banana plantations. There are bright patches of sorghum and maize, or corn as it's called locally, among the dark trees. At one place they stopped the car so that I should taste a pineapple freshly

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

picked, and we went over a plantation. I may be able to bring you back a stick each of sugar-cane. It looks rather like thick bamboo. We must come up to Coff's Harbour and the north coast some time and you must see Brisbane.

Here in Brisbane there's every kind of fresh tropical fruit. In Queensland there's miles and miles of country waiting to be opened up. There's more of a pioneering spirit about; the people seem simpler. Perhaps it's because they're closer to the earth here. Beyond, not so far from the city, lies the vastness of a country like a giant waiting to be awakened from sleep. I'm beginning to stick to the blotting-paper so will stop. How are the mosquito bites? Write soon to your loving

Daddy.

P.S. PETER.—I hear a good deal about the plans for the unification of railway gauges throughout Australia here. The scheme and plans have been drawn up by Sir Harold Clapp—you can look him up in that library of yours. You might like to know it's 1,200 miles from Brisbane to Melbourne, and work out the distance from Sydney yourselves.



*The Australian News and Information Bureau.*

*As their train panted up the steep incline of the Blue Mountains, Anne and Peter could see great stretches of tree-tops waving far below.*



*The Agent General for N S W*



*The Australian News and Information Bureau*

*Miles and miles of dead, ring-barked trees flashed by (ABOVE) BELOW. A home-  
stead, long, low and cream-coloured, with a veranda running round it. This one has  
a modern addition with an upper story, which would be found only in the southern,  
cooler parts of the country.*

## Chapter 10

### A SCORCHING HOT CHRISTMAS

Mr Newsome was home again by the time the night of Redlands' breaking-up arrived. It was being held in the evening, partly owing to the heat, partly so that fathers as well as mothers could come. The two girls spent a glorious morning in their old gym dresses helping to hang the coloured fairy lights strung from tree to tree in the school garden, crawling about on ladders and up branches, climbing the sticky pepper-trees, and generally getting in the electricians' way. The garden in the moonlight made a perfect setting for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was a resounding success. Anne thoroughly enjoyed her first school party in Sydney. Even the boys condescended to say it had been 'a jack of an evening'.

Tufty arrived the day before Christmas Eve, bearing mysterious parcels and a heavy suitcase, from which he took two rock melons and a spray of Christmas bush, its waxy flowers of the much-sought-after deep rose shining among dark leaves. Helen and Michael were leaving by the night mail and they spent the afternoon packing and helping to decorate the house. Besides Christmas bush there were wild Christmas bells (a small yellow and red native flower of the lily family), hydrangeas and Christmas lilies—the Easter lilies of England. It looked gay but so different from English Christmas decorations which, as Anne remarked, are far more prickly at home in Sussex than in Sydney, because of the holly.

It seemed a pity that Helen and Michael had to go. They all went across to the Central Station to see them off.

Peter and Anne were sent to bed early on Christmas Eve. It was as well, for they were up by six on Christmas morning. The sun was already hot when Anne woke and stirred under the sheet that lay lightly upon her. From her bed she watched the roses moving against the sky. Out in the garden the bees were

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

buzzing round the wattle-tree, still in flower. She got up and pattered softly round to Peter's bed, where his bare foot stuck out from under the sheet in the sun. She couldn't resist tickling it. He rolled over, but she went on tickling.

'Pete,' she whispered, 'it's Christmas. Happy Christmas.'

He sat up, half-awake, and fetched an enormous yawn.

'What? Oh, hullo, Anne. Happy Christmas. It's Christmas, isn't it?' Then suddenly he was wide awake. He sprang out of bed, and they crept inside to get their presents for the others from their various hiding-places. They gloated over them for awhile in whispers. 'Let's go down to the beach,' whispered Peter, and down they went. There were only three other early risers there, so they had the beach almost to themselves. They didn't stay long for they each had their presents to arrange on the breakfast table.

Presently Tufty appeared, looking very cool and spruce in his white shorts and open-necked shirt. He had evidently been round the table early. There was an enormous package beside Peter's chair and he could hardly pay his usual close attention to his breakfast for looking at it.

At last his father said, 'Go ahead, my boy. Undo it and put yourself out of your misery.'

Peter was undoing the knots before the words were out of his father's mouth. Indeed he was so excited that he could hardly get them untied though he pretended to be as cool as a mango on a hot day. At last the paper was off.

'Oh, crumbs! Oh, I say, it's a *tent*! Gee-bally-whiz! Just what I wanted for the camp next week. It's absolutely bonzer, Daddy.' Forgetting all the other parcels, he wanted to put it up on the lawn that minute, until his mother suggested he might unwrap the rest of his presents. There was a compass with a little magnifying glass attached from Tufty, and a leather belt from Anne.

'The only thing I beg of you is not to leave that glass down on dry grass this weather. It's just the thing to start a bush fire in the sun,' Tufty said. He had unearthed from somewhere a copy of *Dot and the Kangaroo* for Anne, which, old-fashioned or not, he said she must read.

'I know there are plenty of new Australian books that you'd

## A SCORCHING HOT CHRISTMAS

enjoy reading,' he said half-apologetically. 'But this is one every little girl in Australia ought to have.'

Anne gave Tufty a bear's hug as she thanked him.

'I simply didn't know what to give you, Tufty,' she said as she saw him undoing her parcel. 'I do hope you'll like it. We've been having leather work and handicraft lessons at school, so I made tobacco pouches for you and Daddy.'

Both men assured her they were delighted with the roll-up pouches of soft red leather. 'Very nice job you've made of it, darling,' said her father as he examined his. 'Nice roomy pockets, too.' And he filled it up at once and put it in his pocket. Mike had left a plaited kangaroo riding-crop each for Peter and Anne.

Everyone helped with the tidying and clearing up, and they were off and on their way to Manly for the day by half-past ten in the morning. They were to have Christmas dinner in the cool of the evening when they got back.

On the beach they were to meet some friends of Peter's whose parents had suggested that the two parties might join for lunch if they could find each other. This took some time, as Manly was crowded, but eventually they found them lying fanwise in the sun in their bright costumes under a huge coloured sunshade, to which Mrs Newsome soon added hers. Peter dug a hole in the sand in which to plant its handle, and after carefully marking the place because of the difficulty of finding it again in the crowd, they walked down to the breakers.

'We've quite a walk—it's a long way to the red flags—so we'd better leave a white towel on top. Come on, Mum,' said Peter.

'Peter, I won't be called "Mum". It's nearly as bad as "Ma",' protested Mrs Newsome.

They watched some boys playing with an orange ball larger than a football, as they stood up to their waists in the sea. Then Anne called Mrs Newsome to look at some coloured rafts on which children were lying to ride in on small waves close inshore. 'They look like little rubber eiderdowns. Look how they bob over the tops of the waves. Don't they rip in?' she exclaimed. They hired two for awhile; it was like jumping on horseback, Peter declared. Mrs Newsome had become a keen surfer, and they all waded out to the swell together.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

They took lunch to a little cove near some rocks on the far side of the beach where it was less crowded, and then lay on the sand till after three. One more dip and some Christmas cake, and Tufty suggested that unless they wanted to crawl all the way home for two hours they'd better be making tracks. By this time cars were parked two and three deep down the esplanade.

Their friends were going back later to a dinner of hot turkey and plum pudding, but Mrs Newsome said she couldn't face hot roasts this weather, so they were having theirs cold.

Eventually they sat down to their first Christmas dinner by candlelight. The plum pudding, lit with flaming brandy and with its sprig of pink Christmas bush instead of holly, was a great success. Of course everyone tasted Tufty's rock melon. His friends were calling for them after dinner, and in true Australian Christmas spirit were only half an hour late. After quick coffees and drinks they were soon on their way towards Middle Harbour. Here, at a turning in the bush track which curved above the water, they stopped, and Tufty led them down a flight of rocky steps beneath the trees. As they clambered down they saw below them the little garden the boatman had made. A spreading coral-tree and a pittosporum grew in it, filling the night air with perfume. The brilliant hot moonlight threw dark patterns on to the ground from the trees above.

'He mightn't remember me,' said Tufty in a low voice. 'I used to come here ages ago before the war.' And he knocked.

In the silence whilst they waited they heard an owl hoot, and the water slap-slapping against the shingle. The boat-house was dark; no one was about. Tufty knocked on the door of the little shack again. A willy wagtail rattled his box of matches near by, and the children listened for any more birds or the scuffle of a possum. But there were none, only the faint wash of the tide against the boat-house. The others gathered round. There were Mary, who was quite grown up, Jack, about Peter's age, and some older people. Again Tufty knocked. Suddenly the boatman appeared, carrying a lantern, which he held high to look at them all. He led them into the boat-house, where they chose two boats and ran them down into the water. 'That will

## A SCORCHING HOT CHRISTMAS

be five shillings, please,' the boatman told them, and would they tie the boats up fast when they returned.

The men and boys took the oars, while Mrs Newsome, Mary, and the girls sat back, as they wound round the dark headlands. Light shone from a few small houses perched on the low hills, and they heard distant voices. The blades of the oars dripped with silver, and the boat's wake became suddenly bright with the green phosphorescence. Peter called in delight to the others to look. Anne trailed her hand over the side and brought it up dripping with ghostly silver. Even her nails were tipped with it. The shining drops fell from her hands like specks of mercury. Presently someone from the other boat put on a record. They had Debussy's 'Les Voiles' and Bach's 'Christmas Shepherd' music; then a boy's treble rose up singing a carol. Softly Jack began to sing, then his older brother George, until one by one they had all joined in. The two brothers sang song after song, ending with 'The Holly and the Ivy' and an old French carol that the Newsomes knew well. They were silent after that for awhile, allowing the boats to drift through a field of silver and gold. It was like a dream, especially when other craft passed silently by. One boat had a Chinese lantern swinging from a stick in the bows.

At last they rowed back.

'I could go on and on and on,' said Anne. 'What's that like a castle shining in the moonlight up there?'

Tufty told her it was the old suspension bridge, whilst Mrs Newsome turned to thank him and his friends for a beautiful ending to a happy day. Mary asked them to come round for the afternoon and evening on Sunday week, when they would be having one of their musical parties at which a friend was rehearsing part of a programme for a concert.

'About four?' asked Mrs Newsome.

Mary laughed. 'Oh, no, much earlier. We might have a late tea if the music goes well and someone is in the middle of playing. Or we might do it the other way round. There'll be fancy dress for the children, and cold supper and salads when we feel like it, in between music.'

'Ooh! Fancy dress. I love dressing up,' chipped in Anne.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Mary explained that the family had a theatrical box into which everyone dipped on such occasions. Mrs Newsome told Anne that she hadn't been invited. 'They can't have the whole family,' she added. But Mary and George were quite indignant—of course Anne and Peter were expected, and early, about three. So, when the time came, they all went, and spent a marvellous afternoon and evening dragging clothes out of the box, dressing up, and listening to music.

Before Peter went off on his camping trip, Tufty took them all to Vacluse to see Wentworth House. Vacluse is near Watson's Bay on the south side of the harbour, on the opposite side to Balmoral and Mosman. Mrs Newsome came too, and they all made a great effort and caught the 9.45 boat from Mosman to Circular Quay.

'I do like this way of going from place to place,' said Anne, leaning over the side to watch the thousands of pale-heliotrope jelly-fish floating below in the green water.

'Yes, no noise and no dust,' remarked her mother thankfully. 'Even on the hottest day there's always a little breeze as the boat moves.'

'By the way,' said Tufty, 'have you noticed that the ferry-boats here are just like those you see at Liverpool? Same small double-deckers, you know.'

They hurried out through the clicking turnstile to catch a noisy, slow old tram, which took nearly an hour to reach Vacluse. They walked to Wentworth House past a tiny beach. A park-like field with a few trees in it lies to the left and this, with the cedar-tree, the lawns, and the rose bushes gives it an eighteenth-century air, rather like that of a large country house in England. Mrs Newsome remarked on this, and Tufty agreed, adding that the reason is that it was built by a wild and wealthy Irishman in about 1804.

'Tell us the story, Tufty,' they chorused.

'Well, it only goes to show what extraordinary things could and did happen out here in the early days. There are scores of others, some terrible, some fantastic, but none quite like it. Sir Henry Hayes was "sent out" for abducting a young heiress near Cork. He wasn't arrested for four years until he suddenly

## A SCORCHING HOT CHRISTMAS

gave himself up. In 1801 he was sentenced to death, but this was changed to transportation for life. He gave a lot of trouble and used to bribe the guards or overseers. He did a number of incredible things considering that he was a Crown prisoner, and in 1803 bought two farms at the South Head. This is one of them.'

'Do you mean while he was still a convict?' asked Peter.

'Oh, yes. Many convicts were allowed a certain amount of freedom if they behaved.'

'What a tale!' exclaimed Mrs Newsome as they went inside and up the beautiful main spiral staircase to the large rooms above.

Tufty told them that William Charles Wentworth, who bought the estate in 1827, finished building the house; he made this strange man, who had been a great political figure in Sydney for thirty years, live again for them.

Then they went to the stone coach-house where the Wentworth brougham is still to be seen, but what was more interesting was one of Cobb & Co.'s old coaches which has found a last refuge there.

Although Australia has had railways for nearly a century, the name of Cobb & Co. was famous from one end of Australia to the other for sixty years or more, and the last of their coaches didn't cease running until 1911. Cobb & Co.'s coaches did as much to open up the country as any overlander, going where trains couldn't get through. They ran from Sydney and Parramatta across the Emu and Liverpool Plains, over the Blue Mountains on the old road, past Bathurst and Dubbo and Forbes and Gundagai and out to Cootamundra; they went to Ballarat and Bendigo, over the Dandenongs and into Gippsland. Their six-and-ten-in-hands rattled over the pebbly fords of the Snowy River and crossed Victoria to the South Australian border; they ran across the black-soil country and got bogged in the Darling Downs; they linked the people of the Darling with those of the Murray and the Murrumbidgee rivers; from Victoria to Queensland the coach-and-six of Cobb & Co. was a familiar sight as it jolted its way through flooded fords and washaways, dust and heat.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

So the little party looked with respect and interest at the old coach while Tufty waxed eloquent about it; he told them all this and more as they wandered round or sat in the shade in the garden, until he had peopled house and grounds with the ghosts of Australian history: the wealthy Irishman who brought earth out from Ireland to keep snakes away; the hated Governor Darling; Lady Forbes at a ball meeting the charming Governor Bourke and his daughter, whose crest is the same as that of the great Edmund Burke of the House of Commons; Wentworth and his bitter quarrels with Governor Gipps over land laws; the French artist Jacques Arago, who preferred lying under a tree in Mr Justice Wyld's garden with a bottle of wine, imagining himself back in France, to attending an official party; Wentworth giving a farewell to celebrate Darling's departure, a party which lasted from 4 p.m. till well after midnight and which included a bonfire and an ox roasted whole in the grounds of Wentworth House, and caused a traffic jam on New South Head Road.

The brief flowering season of the famous wistaria vine was over. Tufty told them they mustn't miss it next spring, in October, when clusters of its flowers grow to a great length, and bees hum round it. At its climax, Sydneysiders throng to see it, for it is as famous there as the Hampton Court vine is in London.

After a lazy day at home and on the beach, Tufty insisted on taking them to see Elizabeth Bay House at Darling Point on the other side of the harbour. He said they should see some of the early Colonial houses and learn some history even if it was hot! Jack, whom they had met on Christmas night, came with them. On the way, Tufty took them to look at one of Sydney's historic churches, St James's, at the top of King Street, which was designed in 1819 by Francis Greenway, a convict architect and a friend of Governor Macquarie. He also designed several of the country churches outside Sydney, such as St Matthew's, Windsor, and a lighthouse in the harbour. A building that is 150 years old is ancient in Australia!

The road to Elizabeth Bay House led through the older part of Sydney, streets lined with trees and enormous houses hidden in gardens where pigeons coo all day on stone porticos and

## A SCORCHING HOT CHRISTMAS

balustrades. Under the glass dome at the top of the spiral staircase they were told of parties held there 120 years ago.

Then Tufty took them to lunch at one of the restaurants in King's Cross, the Soho of Sydney.

There was one exciting day before Peter set off for his camp when the whole party went to watch Australia play India in a Test Match at the famous Sydney Cricket Ground. On such an occasion Sydney virtually stops work; everyone either listens-in or goes to watch.

Both Michael and Peter were keen players at school; North Shore has a good grass pitch of its own near the excellent sports ground. Many schools have a concrete pitch for beginners, and as their game improves they are promoted to grass. Boys from the poorer districts round Woolloomooloo may be seen playing in the Domain at the back of one of Sydney's parks in the summer afternoon and evenings.

Like the one in Melbourne, Sydney Cricket Ground holds thousands of spectators, many more than Lord's can accommodate. For Test Matches it is always packed.

Tufty arranged to pilot the party, and one hot morning at 10.30 sharp they met Mr Newsome at the Quay. Summer was at its height.

'My tongue's sticking to the roof of my mouth!' Peter exclaimed.

'Mine too,' agreed Tufty.

Mr Newsome put them into a tram and they went to a milk bar in Castlereagh Street for a quick lemon-and-passion-fruit ice-cream soda. 'It's no use taking a block of ice-cream with us,' lamented Anne. 'It'd melt before we got half-way.' Each member of the party had a packet of sandwiches, and Tufty prudently bought a bag of apples. They joined the crowds now streaming out by 'bus, tram, car, and cycle, and reached the Cricket Ground shortly before twelve. Play began at twelve and people were already lined up.

'I hope we'll get a good view,' said Anne, mopping her perspiring little face, and pulling her hat forward to keep the sun out of her eyes.

'Golly, look at the crowds. Gee whiz, I'm glad Mike and I booked so long ago, or we'd never have got into the shady part

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

of the grandstand, would we?" asked Peter as they wormed their way through the turnstiles and made for the enclosure.

'Look at them sitting on the ground in the blazing sun over there—like ants,' exclaimed Mrs Newsome, who had managed to get her sunshade unfurled. 'I just couldn't have endured it if we'd been in the sun.'

'That's The Hill,' explained Tufty, 'the famous hill where all the barracking comes from. Where all the larrikins and toughs get together.'

'Ever been there?' asked Peter.

'Betcher life. A whole mob of us went from school one day and barracked liked mad.' He piloted them over to the white railings as he talked, and they stood looking past the smooth green pitch, where marksmen and officials were stalking about importantly, to the crowds filing in.

'Where's this score-board we've heard so much about?' asked Mr Newsome.

'There it is—that square thing at the end of The Hill. Looks like a small building. Of course you can't miss the board above it.'

'Oh yes, I see—the names of each team set out in nice large capitals. They catch the glare a bit though,' said Mrs Newsome putting on her sun glasses.

'I thought a score-board was a thing they write on like a black-board—with chalk,' said Anne.

'So it is, Anne, but we've improved on the idea a bit,' said Tufty. 'This one's partly mechanical. It's worked by electric switches from inside the little house.'

He went on to explain that the men who put up the scores are cricket enthusiasts who know all the moves. They watch the game closely and are as quick on the uptake as the umpire; an electric light shines against the name of each player who fields the ball, and against that of each batsman and bowler as he comes on. Naturally, the usual information about the score is shown, but the board also shows the bowlers' average at each stage of the game. For important matches such as a Test, scores can be, and often are, relayed to Martin Place in the middle of Sydney, where another score-board will attract such crowds that traffic will be held up.

The Newsome party at length found their seats high up in the

## A SCORCHING HOT CHRISTMAS

grandstand, and proceeded to munch sandwiches and apples in shade and comfort. They watched a highly exciting game. Just before the break for tea they watched a century being run, and then somebody missed a catch, whereupon The Hill yelled and whistled derision, calling on the player to 'Get a bag'. There was much barracking, shouts of encouragement, howls against the umpire, and remarks, witty and otherwise, aimed at any player of whom The Hill didn't approve. One was advised to get a hair-cut, another asked if he thought he was digging the garden. Someone made a 'duck'; there were more jeers and barracking, which rolled like water off the 'duck's' back as far as he was concerned.

Came six o'clock, and 'stumps'. The air was a little cooler as the crowds swirled towards the gates. It had been a snifter day, Peter said, as they watched the final score going up, and rose stiffly from their seats to join the crowds. After a long wait and a hot trip to the Quay in crowded trams, they were thankful to get on the ferry and back home to the cool of the veranda on the heights of Balmoral. They flung themselves down into chairs, Anne swaying in a rocking-chair in time to the sound of the sea. Yes, it had been a good day, though poor Mummy was half dead with the heat.

A few days later Peter woke at half-past five with a delicious feeling of excitement, for this was the day he was going to his scouts' camp. His pack and his tent lay ready rolled up beside his bed, stencilled with his name in red capitals. It looked grand. He could hardly eat any breakfast, but at last he and his father set off for the rendezvous with all his gear—plate, mug, knife, and the rest. He came back a week later, browner than ever, having had a 'snifter time'. The tent, he said, was 'wizard'.

## *Chapter 11*

### IN THE SHEEP COUNTRY

Late one afternoon in the following week they left Sydney for the North-West. They travelled first class but they did not take sleepers because the extra cost for three was too great. Second class was too tiring for a journey of nearly twelve hours, and there's no third class on N.S.W. Government Railways. Tufty and their father came to see them off. The train gave its musical double whistle as they moved slowly out, gathered speed as they passed Parramatta and clanked across the sunlit Emu Plains, panted up the steep incline to the Blue Mountains, and passed vistas of trees waving like sombre grass far below. They climbed above Springwood to Katoomba and Blackheath, which is 3,495 feet above sea-level, and on to Mount Victoria.

'There don't seem to be any peaks, Mummy,' Peter said in a disappointed tone. Someone in the carriage told them that this is a peculiarity of those mountains. They are really a series of plateaux which loom above the deep gorges and battlemented cliffs, so that you look down on to tops of trees rather than up to peaks. Mount York, near Mount Victoria, the last stop before the track plunges down towards the Bathurst plains, is the historic spot where the first old road ended. Someone else pointed out the direction of the route cut in the bush by Blaxland, Lawson, and Wentworth. Then there was the 'new' road built by William Cox, a pioneer surveyor, with his gang of convicts, in six months. They had to use gunpowder to blast a way through the rocks of the terrible precipice where a roadway now runs down the face of Mount York. The road was finished in January 1815, the year of Waterloo. About twenty years later another surveyor, Thomas Mitchell, came along and altered the steep gradient of that first Great Western Road, the same Major Mitchell of whom their parents were to hear so much when they went to the Murray River later on.

## IN THE SHEEP COUNTRY

'There's the Fish River over in that direction. It was named that by another early Government surveyor, Evans, because he caught such amazingly large fish there. So you see this bit of Australia has quite a history,' their informant wound up.

'I'm awfully glad we got the early train, so's we could see the mountains properly, aren't you, Mummy?' said Anne, and her mother agreed. Someone else told them they must be sure to go by car to Jenolan Caves, as much to see the magnificent rose-and-purple-coloured cliffs as to go down the hundreds of steps to wander about amongst electrically lit stalactite caves, more extraordinary than any Aladdin's caves in a pantomime.

They were in flat country now, charging across the plains to Bathurst, the first big junction town and gateway to the west and north-western lines of N.S.W. At Bathurst they paused and Peter watched the mailbags being thrown out, and the sparks and steam from the engine, until they rushed on, across more plains and low hills. They watched miles and miles of the white deadness of ring-barked trees flash by; trees that turned to sad ghosts in the darkening landscape and stretched white arms towards the sky. As they ran on towards the low hills round Orange, the sun went down in a blaze of glory, and almost instantly the stars came out. Their friend showed them Mount Canoblas, and told them of the famous cherry orchards round Orange, and of its almond-trees, and the almond-flavoured honey that comes from that district in the flowering season. It was near Ophir, fourteen miles away, in country very like the Californian district of America, that Edward Hargraves discovered and made known his gold find in 1851.

There was a different air blowing in at the windows now—the air of the plains and the inland. It was not salty with the sea, but clear, aromatic, scented with the sparsely growing eucalyptus, with the dead trees, the smell of grass and something acrid, a strange, living smell. It came and went as a down-train rushed by. Terbuckety-buck, said the trains together, ter-buckety-buck-buck, louder than ever.

The friendly man in their compartment looked up and said: 'Must be some sheep about, smell them?' He craned out of the window and waved to the distance. The air was clear and without

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

mist though night had fallen. 'Yes, see 'em?' Anne and Peter looked too, and saw a vast moving mass receding towards the edge of the sky.

'How did you know?' they asked.

'Smelt 'em,' answered the stranger. 'That was the funny smell you noticed. Sheep. You'll get to know it.'

The country was flatter now, the trees lower, as far as they could see in the dark. They slept and woke again. The train ran beside miles of post-and-rail fences, woke cattle, left them behind, and rushed into a fenceless country. They rattled past long goods trains, truckloads of coal going up the line, bales of wool going south (they smelt it), sheep and cattle trucks full of lowing, bleating beasts crowded together on the journey to the slaughter-yards of Homebush and Sydney. They learned to recognize the acrid smell of closely herded stock.

They woke as the train stopped with a jerk at some station and they heard the stranger talking to their mother. He told of the stock routes that had developed from the little sheep and cattle paths that criss-crossed the State in the early days of settlement and squatting. Mailbags were thrown out; others thrown in; another train rumbled by, shooting sparks that flew upward to the bright stars. Just before their train moved off there was a silence. They put their heads out into the warm night.

They heard the trees rustle their hard leaves together in the hot breeze. A man in dungarees leaned against the sliprails, his dog at his heels, his horse's bridle on his arm, and there was no other sound. Before them stretched the wide plain. There were no winking village lights, no long brick walls and cosy farm buildings, no solitary houses with lighted windows in the distance, no little brooks running. No cars went by; the motor road, the 'highway', was miles away. They were in the bush, in a train!

'There's nobody there, Mummy, nobody at all, except that man, and that one little house,' said Anne. The station-master's little house was probably the only one for miles. The stranger stood still, at the crossing, waiting; a ring-barked tree creaked in the wind.

'That tree'll fall next time it blows,' their friend remarked, and

## IN THE SHEEP COUNTRY

told them about droving and mobs of cattle, of wells along the government stock routes which are known to the drovers like the streets of a city, and how no man must foul a well lest the stock of others following should die.

He spoke of rivers and lakes that dry up, turn to a string of mud-holes, or worse still to salt pans, in the far interior, of the irrigation systems being extended on the Murrumbidgee, the Murray, and the Darling Rivers, and of the great Snowy River hydro-electric scheme. And then he talked about the salt-bush and blue-bush in the Riverina on the south-western plains of N.S.W. (Salt-bush is a small grey-green bush on which sheep thrive.) He told them stories of horses and rabbits and horses again. Peter, stretched on the seat, was almost asleep, but woke to see a great wheat-paddock, the tall wheat standing yellow and unreaped in the moonlight. Again the wind passed by, and at the rush of their approach they saw the wheat bow before it. Only then did they see how tall it was.

They slept soundly after this till the early morning, when the sun woke them, rising in a flaming ball from the pale rose of the eastern horizon and seeming to touch the flat earth, and still the train rushed through the sheep country alongside brown grass and scattered gum-trees. Again they stopped, again rushed on, and their mother stirred and sent them to wash some of the night's grit and fatigue out of their eyes. They paused at Dubbo, where people hurried out to snatch scalding cups of tea. Presently an early breakfast was served in the dining-car, and they had to pull down one of the wooden-slatted shutters to keep the heat out; they felt too hot to eat much. While their mother got their things together, Anne and Peter stood in the corridor.

The colours they saw were dark green, dull yellow, brown. The dust was biscuit-coloured, the grass the colour of stubble-fields in England when the snows melt, but here no snows fall. Now and again they saw the glint of water where a dam or creek or lagoon lay. The trees, the everlasting belt of bush they were to learn to recognize, were almost black in the distance but, close up, their ragged trunks and bark were all shades of brown, from rust to biscuit. Black crows flew slowly above. 'Wah-wa-aah-wah' they called to the bright blue. Flocks of other birds rose

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

out of dark casuarina trees on a river's edge, among them parakeets liveried in brilliant green. Budgerigars made love, head leaning against tiny head, on the post-and-rail fences.

'Look, Mummy,' called Anne.

'No wonder they're called love-birds,' said her mother, watching the amusing little creatures snuggling up to each other.

There were grey cockatoos and flocks of galahs with rose-coloured breasts and underwings. Their friend showed them the Twelve Apostle birds all in grey. 'They always travel in groups of twelve,' he explained. They passed a hut where skins hung on the wire fence. 'Rabbit-trappers,' said the stranger briefly. He told them about the rosellas (a kind of small parakeet) that eat the wheat seeds, and of ibis standing beside blue water-lilies in a forest-hidden lake in Queensland. And always the brown grass and the ring-barked ghosts of trees rushed by. Over all shone the bright sun and the burning blue of the sky.

The morning was still early when they reached Coonamble. Peter spotted Mr MacNamara first, and waved as the train slowed down. Then Michael and his father were taking their bags, asking whether they had had a good trip, and everyone was talking and laughing. The friendly stranger waved his big hat to them as the train moved off.

'What about a cool drink and a wash and brush-up at the hotel, Mrs Newsome?' Mr MacNamara said. 'We've brought a light lunch in case you're starving before we reach the home-stand.'

'Oh, I say, how much further is it, Mr MacNamara?' asked Peter.

'Well, we've got about another seventy miles by car to do,' was the answer, whilst Mrs Newsome said she'd be delighted to get cool at the hotel. 'How very kind of you to think of letting us do that,' she added. Mr MacNamara said he'd done that journey too often not to know how gritty and tired you feel after washing your face in a train, and he soon had the weary travellers seated in the hotel lounge, where he was well known.

After a brief rest they started off on the last lap of the journey in the big saloon car. The Newsomes thought it a terrific undertaking.



*The Agent-General for Western Australia.*



*Droving sheep. Huge mobs are driven by men on horseback, helped by the little prick-eared, short-coated sheep-dogs (ABOVE). BELOW: One of these dogs is running over the backs of the sheep to get to animals that are misbehaving.*



*On Mrs MacNamara's station shearing was done by electricity. Overhead are the belts and wires connected with the electric clippers.*

## IN THE SHEEP COUNTRY

'No wonder you keep the children down in Sydney for school, and that they can't come home for Easter,' exclaimed Mrs Newsome. But neither Michael nor his father thought much of the distance.

'It's pretty dusty, we're having a dry summer,' Michael said as he and his father packed the baggage into the back of the car, and they produced a couple of linen dust-rugs, 'to keep you as clean as possible. You'll need those sun-glasses of yours, too, Pete and Anne,' added Michael. 'Step on it, Dad, won't you?' Mr MacNamara did.

They were all too tired to notice much, except that there seemed to be a good many stops and Michael was continually getting out to open gates, carefully fastening them again. Once or twice during this operation they had drinks from the iced thermos, and then on again in a cloud of dust. At length Mr MacNamara called out, 'Here we are,' and they woke from their doze to crane their necks, only to see another swing gate beside some slip rails, a thick tree-stump with a large wooden box and a tin fastened to it, and a soft track winding on into the bush.

'What's that?' asked Peter as Michael opened the gate.

'That? That's our mail-box we told you about.'

'Where's the house, Mr MacNamara? I thought you said we're there,' said Anne at last, as she looked at a few brownny-biscuity coloured sheep under the trees who rose baa-aing as the car went by.

'Oh, not yet awhile; another couple of miles or so. Ah, there's the mail-car.' Mr MacNamara slowed down and the mail-man caught them up. 'Morning, Bill. Coming up to the homestead for some tea?'

'Yes, thanks. I've got a coupla parcels here,' he called back.

The MacNamaras explained that Bill usually drove up to the house, as the mail was often quite large. 'It makes a break for the old fellow; he enjoys a chat with the cook or the men, and a cup of tea. He never fails us unless he gets bogged.'

The homestead came in sight just then, a long group of one-storied buildings, partly weatherboard, partly stone, which formed roughly three sides of a square. There was a long cream-washed building with a veranda at the back which Michael

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

explained was now the kitchen—once the original 'Homestead'. Two large galvanized-iron tanks, one at each side of the house, caught the strangers' eyes, and a tall steel windmill revolved slowly in the hot air. They swung onto a gravel drive, through another gate, under a short avenue of gums and other trees, and into a garden where oleander bushes and syringa, cannas, roses, and bright flame-coloured daisies were in flower. Down the steps came Mrs MacNamara and Helen, and they had arrived at last.

'I'm sure you'd all like a shower and some tea,' Mrs MacNamara said when the first greetings were over. 'I never know which to offer people first after that journey.'

They drank tea immediately after lunch outside on the veranda, which was as big as a good-sized room, with sea-grass lounge furniture scattered round and a home-made hammock slung at one end between veranda posts sheltered by grape-vines and creepers. 'We practically live out here in the summer,' said Mrs MacNamara as she let down a thin blind of fine green slats at the sunny end. Mike wore a soft tennis shirt open at the neck and khaki shorts.

'And how do you fill those big tanks?' asked Peter.

'Oh, they catch any water from the roofs when it rains,' answered Mr MacNamara. 'We don't waste a drop, you see; it's so valuable. We have a pipe through to the bathroom for washing with. The windmill pumps up the well water for cooking and general use. Well, I must go.' And he went through the swing door into his office.

They were a sleepy party that evening. Peter and Anne both slept the clock round, so that they didn't meet the family until lunch-time next day.

'Well,' said Michael as he found Peter on the veranda just before lunch, 'I thought I was pretty good at sleeping, but you were dead to the world this time. We tooted the horn outside your window at ten o'clock, and you just rolled over. Didn't even open an eye.'

Peter laughed and looked a bit shamefaced, but Mrs Newsome came to his rescue. 'They were both so interested in watching the country in the train, and listening to stories of dogs and

## IN THE SHEEP COUNTRY

horses and droving that they couldn't have slept for more than two or three hours last night,' she said. 'Now they're ready for anything.'

'You've missed the shearing, that's usually over by October round here, but I'll take you out in the Ford truck when I'm doing one of my rounds, or p'raps Michael can,' Mr MacNamara said. 'I'm afraid we've nothing wonderful in the way of horse-flesh these days because we use the car or a truck so much. Still, we'll find you something. Can either of you ride?'

They both had to say no, but Michael assured them they'd soon learn. 'We'll take you round a bit to-morrow,' he said. 'I've got to look at some fences this afternoon. I'm taking the jeep, Dad, is that all right? I can stow the wire in it.'

'Yes, my boy. What about taking Peter if you can squeeze him in too?' Mike looked doubtful.

'It's a good way. I shan't be going on the road. Feel like some rough riding in the jeep, Pete?'

'Yes, rather. I'm not a bit tired now,' Peter answered.

'You jolly well shouldn't be after your snooze of fifteen hours,' chipped in Helen.

'Right oh! You can help me open and shut some of the gates.'

Mrs MacNamara looked at him doubtfully.

'Peter hasn't any idea what rough-going it is in that jeep over the paddocks. I think it's too much on such a scorching day so soon after he's arrived, Michael,' she said. '*Must* you go to-day? Why not go down to the water-hole for a swim this afternoon and make an early start to-morrow for the boundary?'

'Yes, and then come back at the worst time of day after lunch. I chose the afternoon on purpose so as to come back about six. It's cooler.'

'Mike's going right round the fences on one side of the property for me these holidays,' explained his father. 'It's quite a help and goes towards paying for his education. I think he'd better go on his own to-day. He can take Pete another time.'

'We'd all be dead of apoplexy or something if it was as hot as this in Sydney,' said Helen cheerfully. 'It's a hundred and nine degrees in the shade.'

'Gracious. No wonder there's a heat haze!' exclaimed Mrs

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Newsome, who was stretched in a lounge chair. Peter came up the steps, wearing a wide-brimmed straw hat of Michael's.

'Gee-bally-whiz, Mummy, I can feel the heat right through my shoes. That tank nearly burns your hand!'

'You may go and take your shoes and socks off, Peter, and put on your sandals, and you, too, Anne.'

Later, they all went out in the cool after five and swept the tennis court while Mike and Peter rolled it; Helen marked it, and young Jimmy followed them round trying to cover himself with whitewash.

## *Chapter 12*

### **FUN AND HARD WORK ON A SHEEP STATION**

Next morning Peter went off at eight o'clock with Mike in the jeep, and Mrs MacNamara took Anne and her mother to see the poultry—turkeys, Pekin ducks and golden Orpingtons. But what intrigued Anne was an enclosure in which was a tall kangaroo and a pet wallaroo—a smaller species of kangaroo—with a baby in her pouch. He sat bolt upright, his little pointed face just showing above the furry soft pouch, ears cocked, and wearing a most perky, inquisitive expression. Mother kangaroo took a hop and landed beside them, her delicate nostrils quivering as she sniffed the newcomers. Her little forepaws dangled in front like a helpless old lady's gloved hands.

'The wallaroo is very friendly,' Mrs MacNamara said. 'We'd love to have a pet wombat, but I'm afraid this climate would be too hot.'

Then they visited the storeman's quarters, and saw the bins of flour, the chests of tea, the canisters of currants and raisins and the sacks of sugar, supplies for six months or a year, all kept under lock and key.

Mrs Newsome wanted to know how they had managed during the food-rationing period. 'Oh, we were allowed a proportion of what we used to get, based on an average according to the number of people employed and in the family. It worked out.' Helen showed them her own stock pony, a beautiful creature, and the quiet little creamie that was to be Anne's while she was there. Then she disappeared to the kitchen, saying she was going to help the cook to make some of the cakes for the tennis party.

They were all surprised to see so many people arrive for tennis soon after two next day, and still more so when they learnt that some had travelled twenty, thirty, or even fifty miles by car just for the afternoon. They were beginning a tournament

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

which was to be played out on each other's courts before the end of the holidays. Everyone enjoyed the mulberries Anne and Helen had picked the day before, especially the mulberry filling in some of the cakes.

When Anne and Peter first saw the biscuit-coloured sheep close up, they were surprised. They had expected something white and soft, rather like the lambs at home. But these were square, with very thick, closely set, stiff wool, especially the rams, who gazed haughtily at them, with pink dilated nostrils. Even their necks carried thick rolls of wool.

Mr MacNamara took them inside the rams' enclosure and caught one by the horns; holding it firmly between his knees, he called them over while he parted the wool and showed them its great length and thickness. 'That's what we call the staple,' he explained. Under the brown, weathered, top coat, the wool was fine and white, deepening to pale yellow near the skin where the oil is secreted. 'Feel,' he said to Anne, who put her little hand in and brought it out feeling distinctly greasy.

'That's where the lanoline you use comes from.' Mrs Newsome was interested too.

'I suppose that's what was called oiled wool for making sea-boot and military socks with during the war,' she said.

'Well, yes, unscoured wool, before the natural grease is washed out. But I doubt if you'd have had wool from a £2,000 ram. That's what that chap's worth.' He gave the creature a slap on the rump and it glared at him before moving off with an air of injured dignity.

'I say, £2,000 for a *sheep*.' Peter looked at his host with awe. 'Er—what a lot of money, Mr MacNamara. You must be very rich.' He added this in a low voice, hoping his mother wouldn't hear and tell him he was being rude!

'No, not rich at all, Peter. These rams are a necessary investment. I have to keep the quality of my merino flock and wool high. If I don't, the wool loses quality, and I lose because I don't get the price I should.'

'Oh,' said Peter. 'It must be expensive if you have a *lot* of rams.'

'I don't buy a new one every year. On a property like this

## FUN AND HARD WORK ON A SHEEP STATION

there are many risks. There's drought for one; the river might sink to a muddy bog or dry up altogether for awhile. Or if there was a wet winter or heavy rain and hailstorms in the spring, we might have floods. There's not much high ground to get the sheep onto as you can see. Many a time we've had to haul the ewes out of the river with a heavy stick or even tie a strap round them.'

'Why can't they climb out?' asked Anne.

'Because their wool is so thick that if they get it soaked through by slipping into the river it's so heavy they can't stand and walk. They fall down with its weight.'

'Gee-whiz!' exclaimed Peter.

'Yes, even when you get them on the bank they often fall down because they can't stand up until they're dry.'

'And do you have lots of rabbits?'

'Oh, we manage to keep them down. I've not had to pay a trapper lately. Trappers used to be glad to come and get the skins, but bunny's fur is used for felt hats and imitation fur now, and prices are high. So we poison our own or put sulphur fumes down the burrows and sell the skins ourselves. But we're pretty free. Rabbit-proof fencing costs double what it used to, though. It's one of my heaviest expenses.'

'You must be able to have lots of rabbit pie,' said Anne. The MacNamaras regarded her with pained surprise.

'Eat rabbits?' asked Helen.

'Ugh, the very thought of eating one of the little beggars makes me feel sick,' exclaimed Michael.

'Specially when they might have taken poison, Anne.'

Mrs Newsome wanted to know if there was anything else besides sheep on the station. Mr MacNamara said no.

'I have different kinds of sheep, though. Some for mutton; some, like merinos, for wool. Then there's the fat-lamb trade, and their skins are used. Now I'm going in for something new. I'm breeding a small flock for their skins, especially to make pretty fur coats for wealthy women overseas. Some will be dyed black; others, given a new treatment, will come out like silk, in pale blues and pinks.'

Peter wanted to know how many sheep there are on a big station like Mr MacNamara's, and how big it was.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Mr MacNamara said that he had about 30,000 sheep. 'The property covers about 80,000 acres. Here we are at the shearing-shed.' He unlocked the door and led them into a huge, long room criss-crossed with belts and wires overhead. 'We shear by electricity, which we generate ourselves.' It certainly was very businesslike and spotlessly clean. He showed them the stand for each man, who runs electric shears over the animals. The big wool-sorting table, where the expert wool-classers work, stood at one end of the long room. They were shown the presses where the wool is packed, pressed, and baled before starting on its long journey by motor-lorry and waggon to the rail-head, and thence to the Wool Exchange at Sydney for auction.

'It's a very busy place in the season,' went on Mr MacNamara. 'Boys take away the fleeces as they're shorn. They go to the big wool table over there, and then the wool-classers get busy at another table. Other boys are sweeping up the floor all the time.' He switched on for a moment to let them hear the machinery hum.

'Where are all the shearers now?'

'Oh, they come by contract—so many for so many sheep. They don't live here. They have to be housed and fed, though they bring their own cook—I should say chef. Shearers' meals are famous! Look, here are their quarters.' He took them over to the low dormitory-like wooden buildings and showed them bunks tiered over one another, shower-baths, and tin wash-basins.

'It's not so easy as it sounds, running a sheep station, is it?' remarked Mrs Newsome.

'No, it's an organization, and a big one. Then there's an awful lot of office work. We press, bale, weigh, and brand all our own wool before it's loaded up. There's the mustering to keep going, too. We're always mustering for something; if it's not shearing it's lamb-marking in autumn or winter. Then they have to be dipped and moved from one paddock to another for pasture. The work's endless.'

They passed the sheep-pens where the sheep are sorted.

'Don't you do any ploughing, Mr MacNamara?' asked Peter, who was feeling rather bewildered. It was all so different from the little farms he'd seen at the Lakes in his holidays.

## FUN AND HARD WORK ON A SHEEP STATION

'I put some wheat down during the war at Government request. I've got one paddock still; it did fairly well. You can just see it.' He pointed away into the distance, and again Anne and Peter felt awed at the size of the place.

Next afternoon Peter went out with Michael, who was very proud of running round to do jobs in the jeep, bought out of surplus army stock after the war. He was taking stores and rations to a stockman's hut on the far side of the run, together with wire and tools in case he saw any fences needing a quick repair. Peter noticed how methodically he jotted down notes about repairs or loose posts in a little book. They passed some merino stud sheep being slowly driven along for some purpose by a sun-browned man in a wide hat and long dungarees. He sat a dark bay horse, riding loosely, with long stirrups, and horse and rider merged into the surrounding brown and dull green landscape like weathered sculpture. Near a dam, or water-hole as Mike called it, they stopped and had tea under some wilgas, the small dark kind of eucalyptus that grows in the Plain country.

They reached the stockman's hut just as he came in. Michael gave him the rations he had brought, tea, sugar, flour, salt, butter, and a couple of big cabbages from the garden, with some tomatoes and potatoes. The last three were extra to the supplies normally given to stockmen. The expression 'rations' has long been used on Australian stations, and means any basic supplies given to men employed on a place. It has nothing to do with 'rationed' food in time of shortage.

'Oh, and here are the newspapers for the last three weeks, and my mother thought you'd like a tin of pineapple and some fresh milk.' Michael handed them over.

The grizzled old chap asked the boys into his shack while thanking Michael. A passion-fruit vine and a thin creeper with little green balloons straggled up the tiny 'veranda' post. Inside it was all very neat, the blankets folded on the bunk, and the scrubbed table having its inevitable newspaper. Two cats lay in the shade not far from the sheep-dog who panted near the tank, looking at the strangers out of the corner of a wary eye. 'Tea?' asked the man, indicating the billy in the open fireplace. But

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Michael explained they'd had it on the way, and gave him the rest of the cakes they'd brought, which pleased the old man greatly. He produced some currant damper and besought them to have a bit. He was pleased when Peter enjoyed the large hunk he cut, and promised to show them how to make it when next they came out.

Peter never forgot that afternoon. Though he didn't then know it, that day and the first long train journey from Sydney were to remain among his sharpest memories of Australia. After that holiday, whenever Peter and Anne heard the word Australia, they would see in imagination not only the streets and tall buildings, the red roofs, green and flowery gardens, and the sparkling blues of the sea round the great cities, but that other Australia, the tree-encircled bush, the brown grass paddocks which never seemed to end, the miles of post-and-rail fencing, the sliprails. They would hear the crackle of eucalyptus leaves under their feet and smell that aromatic fragrance mingled with sheep, dust, and wood-smoke, and they would see, over all, the clear brilliance of the air like a hot crystal shining. Nor would it be a memory of country empty and alone, but of school-friends and Helen and Michael.

## Chapter 13

### FLYING FOXES AND AN EMU CHASE

One day they went over to a neighbouring station on the Gwydir River about fifty miles off—not very far by Australian standards. The whole party set off in high spirits one hot morning in the big saloon car. Mike thought they should have towed the jeep behind to carry the racquets and shoes and white flannels! They had a picnic lunch on the way under some trees. Mr MacNamara would not allow a fire to be lit because of the wind and the heat, so drinks were brought in various thermos flasks, with a canvas waterbag swinging underneath the car at the back. They arrived soon after two at 'Lal-lal', the Coxes' place.

In spite of the heat, tennis began as soon as they had had a drink. The grown-ups sat in the shade of the trees and on the veranda to watch the mixed doubles played by sets of young people about Peter's and Michael's ages. Everyone was soon dripping with heat and excitement, and they were glad to go off to the bathroom for a good wash before the extremely satisfactory sit-down tea. Mrs Newsome wondered how they managed to produce so many delicious iced sponge-cakes, such cool, hard jellies, and cream, when the thermometer was still at 100 degrees, until her hostess explained that when the frigidaire was full, as theirs frequently was, being small, she lowered the jellies and custards in a basket down the well, where they would set in an hour or two.

'I allow no one to pull the basket up but myself,' she said.

The river ran alongside the garden and right through the property. Nectarines and other fruit grew beside it, with weeping willows and she-oaks.

'Like to come down to the river?' asked Alice when their tennis was over. She took them to her seat in a big willow, and they watched the dragon-flies darting after insects. 'We might see a water-rat if we're quiet,' she whispered. After a long ten

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

minutes a small water-rat went swimming by at a terrific rate. Alice said he had marvellous thick silky fur, but that they didn't often catch any because they are rather rare, and their father didn't approve of killing them off. 'He likes them in the river,' she said, 'and is always hoping that a platypus will come along too.'

'I say, what's the scent?' asked Peter who had joined them with the boys, as they wandered out of the garden.

'The gum-trees have decided to flower this summer. Look,' said Alice. The tall trees were crowded with clusters of fuzzy, honey-coloured little flowers that seemed to have a fringe instead of petals. The bees were buzzing round them and the hot air was full of their honeyed scent and the smell of eucalyptus leaves. The sun had almost reached the horizon and Alice seemed to be waiting for something. 'The bees love the gum-blossoms, and so do the flying-foxes, though they've only come in small numbers so far.'

A ghostly shadow went by, silently.

'Look, what are they?' asked Peter.

'Flying-foxes,' answered Alice. 'They've smelt the gum-blossoms that are out here this year and they've begun to come down from Queensland. They live mostly on honey and any kind of fruit, wild or cultivated. I hope they won't get all our fruit when they've finished off the honey.'

'*Flying-foxes!* How queer. Ours have bushy tails in England, and they're the size of a small dog,' exclaimed Peter.

'Oh, these aren't *that* kind of fox at all. Look, on the other side of the river,' answered Alice. 'See those little black things with leathery-looking wings on the trees? They're beginning to wake up now that it's nearly sunset.'

The others looked. There, sure enough, hundreds of small bodies hung head downwards from boughs and branches, their featherless, leather-like wings folded round them, only their tiny black fox-faces showing.

'Look, there's one flying. Oh, isn't he hideous?' exclaimed Peter.

'Like a large bat,' said Anne. Two went by without a sound.

By the time they reached the garden the isolated groups had

## FLYING FOXES AND AN EMU CHASE

swelled to a stream, and the whole party stood on the courts to watch. As the air darkened the 'foxes' flew by in a soundless narrow belt for ten minutes. Occasionally one would give a tiny shrill squeak.

Mr Cox explained that when alarmed they chattered softly, and when eating fruit their faint, high-pitched voices went on continuously. Originally they came to Queensland from New Guinea, and have now travelled all the way down the east coast, even reaching Victoria in small numbers in search of honey. 'The early explorers called them devils, and they are most uncanny with their long, narrow, black faces and their very wide wings and tiny bodies.'

Although their hostess begged them to stay the night at 'Lal-lal', they felt that they were too large a party, and so they packed into the car for the long drive back. The sunset was still brilliant in the sky, making long shadows slant across the road, as they left. The willy-willies (or little dust whirligigs) had ceased to flicker and the shimmering heat haze had gone as they drove towards the fiery west. Mr MacNamara saw a rabbit and chased it but it was too quick for him. His wife protested that he'd kill them all yet by skidding on one. He got out and picked up a couple of stout sticks then, saying he'd settle their hash for them if he saw any more, and that he'd send the trappers out next week.

'They're too close to the property for my liking,' he said.

'But we're about thirty or forty miles away, aren't we, sir?' asked Peter. Mr Mac said that thirty miles is nothing to a rabbit family.

Now the marvellous glow of the sky flamed and paled in unnameable colours; the short wilga-trees were like black bars across it. Mrs MacNamara told them that these sunsets are peculiar to flat country.

'It's as though they are sent to make up for the lack of colour in the landscape.'

'I suppose this country is rather like the desert, with its expanse of sky and space, and, I must say, loneliness. Though, of course, it's not sandy,' said Mrs Newsome.

But the colours are there, subtle blue-green, greys, and rusts.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

It's the emerald green of England that strikes an Australian most on arrival. As they talked, the sky faded to delicate saffron and green.

'Look, Dad, there are two kangaroos!' exclaimed Helen suddenly. 'Let's go after them.'

'So there are, by Jove. We'll just see how fast they'll go for Anne and Peter.' He trod on the accelerator. But it was too risky in the half-light and the two animals soon bounded out of sight. They reached home by moonlight.

Another day Helen and Anne went off in the Ford truck with Michael and Peter. This time the head stockman drove. He and Michael were going to tighten up some wires and see to the fences generally, keeping a sharp look-out for any signs of blowfly or other ills among the sheep. They had well-filled picnic baskets as usual, with iced thermos drinks, oranges and bananas, not to mention the billy for tea, without which the stockman would not have stirred.

First they went down to the mail-box in case there were any parcels or letters for the homestead, and found Bill, the mail-man, just coming in at the gate. Michael unlocked the galvanized iron and wooden box nailed to a tall tree-stump to see if any notes had been dropped in.

'Morning, Bill,' he called.

Bill came over; he dearly loved a yarn. He eyed them. 'Going out to inspect the run?' he inquired jocularly, and gave them various bits of gossip. 'I expect young Jimmy'll be having correspondence lessons next. The letter-box'll be filled up then,' he remarked.

'We used to fill up the mail-box, didn't we, Bill?' said Helen, ranging alongside on Billy Boy. Bill agreed, and climbed back into the mail-van, waiting for one of them to close the gate.

When they got back with the mail and Bill, they found Helen's sister and brother, Sheila and Jimmy, trying to make the pet baby kangaroo pose.

'Anne, Mike, look,' shouted Jimmy, 'he's sucking his bottle.' And so he was. Everyone came to see; Mary from the kitchen, Mr and Mrs MacNamara, the whole household stood round in fits of laughter as the little kangaroo stood on his hind legs

## FLYING FOXES AND AN EMU CHASE

and took the bottle in his front paws, which are very short and often used like little hands, and tilted the bottle to his mouth, sucking the rubber teat. Anne wanted to know how old he was, and was told over a year. Sheila tried to draw him for her correspondence teacher to see, but Peter rushed off to get the camera, and after some shuffling and moving of the poor little creature into the light, he obligingly posed with his uplifted milk-bottle while Michael and Peter each took a snap. Then he was petted and cuddled, which he seemed to enjoy. He had been found and brought in a few months ago. His mother must have been chased or had died. Soon he would have to go to the enclosure outside for good, but in the meantime he was a great pet, if a little troublesome because of the way he leaped about.

After this interlude the picnic party resumed its way in the Ford truck, and spent a long and happy day running alongside fences and making closer acquaintance with the sheep.

'Michael, where are all the black fellows?' asked Anne as they sat under some trees at lunch-time sucking their oranges. 'I thought we'd be sure to see some.'

'As a matter of fact you don't see many in New South Wales, even as far out as this. The early settlers drove them away or killed many. All round here were their hunting grounds for, as you know, they moved about from district to district in search of food, and didn't cultivate the earth or grow things at all. I'm afraid there was a lot of cruelty to them a hundred years ago, even fifty years ago. But those that are left have been carefully looked after, more and more during the past thirty years. There are special departments for the protection of aborigines in all the States, and there have been for donkey's years. The Commonwealth Government trains people especially to look after them now. It's part of the job of the Department of the Interior, I think.'

'I say, Mike, where did you learn all that?' asked Helen.

'Well, I'm interested in them. After all, it used to be their country.'

'Aren't there many left then?' asked Anne.

'Oh, yes, about 48,000. But you don't see them in N.S.W.'

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

much, never in the cities, and only in very outback towns, hardly at all in Victoria. They work on the big cattle-stations away out in the Northern Territory and South Australia. They can pack up and go for a walk-about, you know, any time they feel inclined. They just wander off and go bush for a while. It's allowed by the law of the land, because that's their life. Dad says they are magnificent riders and horse-breakers and stockmen, and are very good on a station. They've got huge reserves all over the place too, in Western and South Australia as well as Queensland and the Northern Territory.'

'What's a reserve?' asked Peter.

'Oh, a huge tract of land set aside for them to wander about in. Nobody can come and settle there then, you see. That part is theirs. Nobody can build on it or run stock on it or anything.'

'A cousin of ours up in the Northern Territory during the war said they had some as camp orderlies. And some were pilots on light naval craft on the coast in the far north, too,' said Helen.

The talk drifted away from blacks, and they lay back under the trees watching the leaves against the sky for awhile before starting off again.

The stockman took them outside the run fence to look at something or other. It was then that they saw the emus, two of them stalking along in their jerky rather foolish way. Michael and the stockman looked at each other.

'Is that door fast?' Michael leaned back to make sure everything was firm. 'O.K. Let her rip, Mac,' he said. Mac told them to hang on and he let her rip. The car shot forward, bumping on the rough track. When the birds heard them their long, powerful legs streaked straight into a run.

'See how fast they'll go,' said Mac.

Emus don't fly and are about the height of an ostrich. Their ridiculous little tufts of tail-feathers which stick up were bobbing up and down. Faster and faster, thirty-five, forty, forty-five, read Mike from the speedometer. A belt of trees lay some distance ahead; the emus made for it, but then heard the car closing in on them, and doubled back to the fence. Being birds of very little brain they ran straight at it. Mac pulled up, and they all laughed as there was a twanging of wires, and from a cloud of feathers



*The South Australian Tourist and Publicity Bureau, Adelaide.*

**ABOVE:** *One of the old-time paddle-wheelers on the river Murray. BELOW:* *A clever arrangement of irrigation channels.*



*The South Australian Tourist and Publicity Bureau, Adelaide.*



*The South Australian Tourist and Publicity Bureau, Adelaide.*

*Little grapes spread out in the sun to dry (ABOVE). Their wide sun-hats bobbing as they move, these girls pick, pick, pick all day long (BELOW).*

## FLYING FOXES AND AN EMU CHASE

and dust two outraged birds emerged on the other side and continued their run. Then they had to repair the fence, but as Mac remarked, they'd had some fun, and a run for their money. They drove on and found more fencing to repair, and then they were all set for the homestead, where they arrived just in time to wash and change before dinner.

All too soon the last few days of the visit came round. They had been made to feel so completely at home that it was hard to believe they'd not heard of each other six months earlier. Mac brought in the bright wing of a little parrakeet for Anne, and promised to catch and tame a pair of budgerigars for her. On their last day they were taken to the Bushmen's Carnival at Moree some eighty miles away. It was one of the high lights of the visit, for there are cattle stations and thoroughbred studs as well as sheep in the surrounding districts from Walgett to Goondiwindi, from Inverell to Murrurundi and Quirindi, as well as dairy farms on the north coast. These bushmen's carnivals are held annually at many country towns, on the local race-course or show-ground, which are not improvised fields but special areas set aside for the purpose. After a very early night they breakfasted at seven, making an early start by car for Moree before the day got too hot. As usual they went off with the billy and picnic baskets packed, and the canvas waterbag slung underneath the car. Mrs Newsome insisted on being hostess for a change at the hotel for lunch and had to be very firm about it.

After a run round the town to see the famous hot springs of Moree, they drove to the show-ground.

The ring events were most exciting. Helen picked out riding points and the various horses with an expert eye, as in fact did the whole family. In cattle-drafting or camp-drafting it takes a very fast horse within the restricted area of a ring to get right in on a wild beast as soon as he crosses the 'cut-out' line; it then takes some riding to stick to him. Over sixty horses competed, horses and riders coming from districts as far apart as Singleton, Dubbo, and Quirindi, and from Central Queensland. The N.S.W. championships are usually held at Lismore and Casino, where the first prize is about £100.

To everyone's great joy there was a buck-jumping competition

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

on cattle as well as on horses. The horses knew all the tricks and turned themselves into rounded arches in their efforts to dislodge the riders. Then came what was to the English visitors the most novel event of the day. A number of competitors came into the ring mounted on steers, barebacked. The sunburned riders wore short, black, elastic-sided boots as a rule, and looked pretty tough.

'It must hurt sitting on top of that bony spine,' exclaimed Peter.

The steer wagged its head and rushed about all over the ring, kicking and bucking, trying to shake the rider off.

'It must be very hard to hold,' said Anne, with her eyes glued to the scene as a red and white animal came rushing jerkily up to the fence, puffing and blowing.

Two riders had been thrown. Mr MacNamara laughed and said no steer ever needed training in the art of bucking. People cheered from all over the ground when one animal jumped the low rail and bolted into the bush across the road, where he at last managed to dislodge his rider.

The Australian sits his horse so easily that his great skill is not always realized. The black fellow is another splendid horseman. 'But the exhibitions you'll see from Bundaberg in Queensland to Casino are tame compared with the real thing,' Mr MacNamara told them. 'You want to see cattle-drafting in the scrub up in the Queensland ranges! Have you seen *The Overlanders*—that was good—Northern Territory and Central Australia. Not our country, though!'

Next morning they caught the train to Narrabri for they were taking the route to Newcastle and along the Hawkesbury river on their return. They had never had such a holiday in their lives, and they told the MacNamaras they would never forget that wonderful time. Michael and Helen were following in a few days for school.

## *Chapter 14*

### DOWN THE MURRAY RIVER AND ON TO ADELAIDE

February came and they were back at school, Michael working for his honours, Peter for the leaving certificate, Anne for a music exam. in a few months' time. She was still an enthusiastic member of the Mosman Children's Library. Helen had become more interested in books than she'd ever been, and often went with Anne. They were very lucky, for though the number of municipal children's libraries in Sydney is growing, they are not in every borough as they are in England's large towns, and there are none in Australian country towns as yet.

February in Sydney is steamy. They oozed with heat until the evenings, when they waited, sometimes in vain, for the southerly buster to blow up. Then the temperature would drop several degrees in half an hour. Towards the end of the month, Mrs MacNamara came down to Sydney for a few weeks. Mrs Newsome was delighted. She and her husband planned a journey to Adelaide, capital of South Australia. They would fly to Mildura, going down the Murray to Morgan by boat, and on by car. It was a hot day that promised a thunderstorm when they said good-bye at the Sydney airport at Mascot. Mrs Newsome promised to write long letters, keeping them as a journal from day to day. The children watched until the plane was a mere speck in the sky, then Mrs MacNamara took them to the flicks. The cinema was air-conditioned to keep it cool, and it was pleasant to sit inside after the heat of the streets.

The following Saturday Tufty telephoned to know if they'd all like to come with him to Muogamarra, the wild-flower sanctuary in the Hawkesbury reserve on the outskirts of Sydney. They made a day of it with an early morning start, and brought Tufty back with them for the week-end.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

They waited eagerly for letters from their mother, waylaying the postman whenever they saw him near the house, or hanging over the gate watching for him to come with the morning delivery. They became great friends. He soon began to ask for news of the trip after every letter. 'Well, how's your Mum liking all the fruit? Sent you a box yet?' he'd ask. Or, 'How's the temperature down Mildura way? Pretty hot, I reckon. You'll be late. Playing the wag from school to read those letters of yours.' And his eyes would twinkle as he gave them the thick envelopes.

Well, here we are darlings [wrote their mother from Mildura] on the border of New South Wales and Victoria. We had a very comfortable trip in the plane. It was beautifully cool.

When we reached the irrigation areas, as the stretches of hundreds of miles along the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers are called, we saw something quite new to us in Australia: a maze of patterns—lozenges and coloured cubes—of orchards and vineyards. As we neared the Murray and the Victorian border, the landscape was criss-crossed with these horizontal and vertical lines of fruit trees and vineyards, irrigation channels and ditches. There were no hedges, or I might say that it reminded us a little of country in England. Running through it all, dominating everything, was the wide river, hundreds of miles of it. Naturally we didn't see all of it, or follow its course by air. At 1,500 feet the pattern is strangely like some modern pictures, and I was reminded of the work of Margaret Preston, that Australian artist whose pictures I've shown you in the Sydney National Gallery. Sometimes the banks of the river are bordered on either side with bright green. Sometimes the banks are flat, or there are none, just a sheet of water bordered by fat red gum-trees.

We could have come from Melbourne by road or by the Mildura express—about 375 miles. It only takes a night in a sleeper now. Before the railway came, it took five or ten days according to the state of the roads. Do you notice how they call all the big arterial motor roads 'highways' here? Mildura is on the Victorian side of the River Murray, so we nod across to N.S.W. We shall visit some fruit-townships on both sides before going on down river. We hope to get berths on one of the Murray boats from here to Morgan in South Australia; it's about a week's journey.

Mildura is a great surprise. It's a modern, bustling, well-laid-out little town with large shops, some fine public buildings, a big hospital, a Carnegie Library, beauty parlours, hotels and neon lights, garages, and river wharves, and it is surrounded by orchards. It is refreshing to find a country town with wide tree-lined streets. Palms jostle poplars; its jacarandas and wattles are

## DOWN THE MURRAY RIVER AND ON TO ADELAIDE

still in bloom. Deakin Avenue is named after Alfred Deakin, one of Australia's more brilliant statesmen who believed in the two Chaffey brothers and their irrigation schemes and helped to bring them over from Canada. It is bordered, I'm glad to say, with eucalyptus—gum-trees. I do like to see the native trees used in public gardens and streets! Mildura has its own commercial wireless station, 3 MA. You might try to get it. Of course, people get the National wavelength as well—if they've a short-wave set they can get the B.B.C. Pacific Service from London. Mildura (town and district) has a population of 26,000. Most of the houses are surrounded by verandas rather than modern sun porches. All have gardens, and the verandas are sheltered from the heat by a light cane curtain or creepers, bougainvillea with its clusters of purple flowers, or grape-vines, with equally attractive clusters of a different sort!

For we're in the land of grapes. Everyone is a connoisseur, and everywhere we see great bunches of white or black muscatels. We're learning how many different kinds of grape there are; purple long-tapering Lady's Fingers, the dark Black Prince (both luscious, but without the delectable muscatel flavour), and the Spanish Isabella which has a strange tang. Wine grapes are different again, but the muscatel is the king of all. It is the grape used for dessert raisins, and for those lovely *lexia* cooking raisins we used sometimes to get in London. Never talk to me again of English hothouse grapes after the sun-ripened ones of the Murray! At the hotel we have had fresh local muscatel dessert raisins at dinner.

The earth is a strange deep red. The colours, indeed, are like those in some vivid Russian ballet. Perhaps an Australian dancer will do a Grape Harvest Ballet one day. The artists will only have to come to the Murray Valley to find the richest colours imaginable. There are the red earth, the leafy green of trees hung with fruit of gold and fire, plums, apricots, peaches, and the purples and pale green of grapes against the deep turquoise blue of the vines, which are sprayed with sulphur, as in France, to keep certain pests away. This turns them a strange metallic colour. In the distance are the dark gum-trees, the brown grass, and over it all the heat haze shimmers, and the brilliant blue sky burns.

The sultana grapes aren't picked till March, but yesterday we went to a vineyard where the currant harvest was in full swing—not our English blackcurrants, but the little grapes to be dried for pudding currants. Heaped boxes and baskets stood about piled with the dark purple bunches that looked beautiful against the cloudless blue sky, though everyone was too busy gathering to notice colours. The pickers come from far and near, and camp near the vineyards or orchards that are to be picked. After an early breakfast under the gum-trees, the long back-breaking day begins, for the vines are low and people have to stoop. All of them, men and women, wear

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

wide-brimmed straw hats. I've bought one for wearing on the boat and so has Daddy. We shall look a funny pair.

They've nearly finished picking the apricots—terribly fragile fruit that have to be handled with great care. We were just in time to see the last of them being gathered near Mildura. A horse and cart, or lorry, moves from tree to tree, bumping over the earth, to take the bright, carefully gathered load from bucket and basket. Boys and girls, owners and employees, men and women, pick, pick, pick all day long, their wide sun-hats bobbing about as they move. Apricots are split in half, stoned, and placed on trays in the sun for a short while to dry. Then they go to sulphur houses for bleaching, after which they are put in the hot sun again for three or four days where they mellow to that deep burnt orange. The kernels, you'll be interested to learn, are full of oil, and are crushed for it; this must be why there aren't so many kernels in apricot jam as there used to be! The oil is used in London for beauty preparations, and no doubt in Sydney and Melbourne as well, and also for flavourings for cooking.

We still prefer fresh apricots and peaches to any dried ones! The best are not sold in Australia but are 'for export', an all-too-familiar expression to us. I've been learning the difference between clingstone and slipstone peaches. Their names explain them, but the first are for cooking and jam, the second for eating raw. Those yellow ones you buy in tins, whole, are marvellous when they're raw and fresh from the bough. They taste like a different fruit, and are often the size of a large orange. Sometimes the boughs crack with their weight. If ever we have that house and garden of our own, the first trees I shall plant will be a peach, an orange, a lemon, and an apricot.

When we reach Berri in S. Australia we'll send you a box of muscatel raisins and crystallized fruit. We've seen lorry-loads of fruit going to the packing houses to be sorted and packed by machinery. Yesterday we went to Red Cliffs. It is famous for the astonishing red gorges through which the Murray falls just there. It was cleared and settled by soldiers after the 1914-18 war. Daddy has just come in to say that he's got berths for the steamer trip down to Morgan. So good-bye, darlings, until to-morrow or the next day. We sail in an hour.

The letter was continued on the boat, *The Gem*:

Here we are, on the shady side of the deck in the late afternoon, having said good-bye to Mildura, which we shall remember for its apricots fired with the colour of the sun. We've had apricot ice-cream sodas, apricots stewed, and made into sweets of every description.

We both feel that we are seeing the real Australia, away from the big cities, where indeed too many people live for the size of the country and

## DOWN THE MURRAY RIVER AND ON TO ADELAIDE

population. The other bit of the true Australia we've all seen was up at the MacNamaras' station on those north-western plains. Here we are seeing the smaller places, what's called 'closer settlement'. Up there and along parts of the Murray is the big property that carries the sheep. These two things, the great stations where sheep and cattle roam, and which will always be sheep and cattle areas because of the dryness or poverty of the soil, and the dairy farms, orchards and vineyards, the small wheat farms and selections, are like the two halves of a great peach, each necessary to the other. They *are*, in fact, Australia, more than the large cities like Sydney and Melbourne.

When I see the richness of this part of the country and all that's been made possible by water and pumping machinery, I'd like to take people from the cities, and thousands from London, bring them here and tell them how much better off and happier they'd be in this open-air life than slaving away as typists and office workers and civil servants! Even if they had to live in a shack for awhile. Heaps of love, darlings.

The next letter was from their father.

Darling Fidget and Fudget [he wrote]. Here we are floating along on our two-decker Murray River boat. We're going through one long garden all the way, and there is a welcome absence of ring-barked trees as our steamer chugs along past orchards and townships.

There's bush here and there, where the famous Murray gums, real old patriarchs of enormous girth, stand near the water. Some lean over the little wharves, where an old chap sits fishing. But although we keep passing stretches where they still grow, most of these magnificent old trees have been cut down, 'cleared' as they say, to make room for the orchards. It's a pity more are not left. We have been told of the magnificent groves of Murray pines there used to be, particularly along the Victorian and New South Wales river-banks, which we're leaving behind. But these, too, have nearly vanished. We saw a few outside Red Cliffs. Nothing has so much reminded me of the vaulted arches of a Gothic cathedral. It was like looking down a nave as long or longer than Ely.

You know, I expect, that the Murray is 1,520 miles long, and that it's one of the few Australian rivers that can be navigated for any distance, in spite of its strange tricks. On either side of it, from Albury on the N.S.W.-Victorian border to Renmark in South Australia and beyond, are thousands of acres of these irrigated orchards and vineyards. And this is 'low-rainfall country', which means that it's very low—about ten inches a year. Yet there are more people in these settlements and towns than in all the low-rainfall country in the rest of Australia. Seventeen towns in 500 miles here

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

is a great number, especially in what used to be desert or mallee country. (Mallee is a low bush.) All this has been made possible by the magic of irrigation.

Mr Newsome's letter went on to tell them of the locks and weirs, which are most interesting and complicated.

They raise or lower the river to different levels, as locks have a habit of doing. It's like gliding round and down an immense flight of long liquid stairs, each silver stair nearly fifty miles long. Some of these locks and reservoirs, which are under Government control, are feats of engineering. Many years passed between the time when the two Chaffey brothers first came to the country at the invitation of Alfred Deakin in 1886-7 to build irrigation works, and the time when vines and fruit took root in the land and paid. Fortunes were lost before success came. You can read all about it in a life of the Chaffey brothers and in Ernestine Hill's *Water into Gold* which we've bought. I don't think it will bore you too much if I tell you that not until 1915 did N.S.W., Victoria, and South Australia join with the Commonwealth Government to form a permanent commission controlling the waters of the Murray and its tributaries. This is the Murray River Commission. There are also river and water-supply commissions in each of the three States. 'South Australia's chief undertaking was to wall back the tidal waters where the Murray flows into the sea, freshening the half-salt lakes and freeing the lower river of salt', to quote *Water into Gold*.

These barrages at the Murray's mouth were finished only in 1940. They not only keep the salt sea out, but they keep the internal water high enough for it to flow to places where it is needed most. For the Murray does strange things. In 1929 it evaporated—disappeared—for hundreds of miles, and in the great drought of 1944-5 it carried no water to the sea for some months. No, it's not a get-rich-quick country, this Australia. But when once it has conquered you, it will not let you go! Its reluctant earth has to be worked on very hard before anything can be won from it.

\* \* \*

Have just had a very nice lunch of the famous Murray cod and lots of fruit. Now we're on deck watching the irrigation channels as we pass them. Some are as wide as a small river at home, fringed with reeds, weeping willows and pampas grass. These are the more permanent waterways. The ditches are smaller and owners of properties can lock them, allowing the

## DOWN THE MURRAY RIVER AND ON TO ADELAIDE

water in only when they actually want it. We haven't seen the great Hume Reservoir ten miles from Albury on the Victoria-N.S.W. border nearly 500 miles from where our journey began, which took seventeen years to build and is the third largest reservoir in the world. The weir at Mildura was remarkable enough for us. It's on steel wheels in sections and each section weighs about ten tons. It is about 570 feet long and crosses the river. The strange thing is that it can be lifted right out by steel cables onto specially built concrete beds on the bank if there's a flood, or for inspection and repairs. As it raises the level of the water for fifty miles downstream, you can imagine how useful this is in a flood! The roar of the waters as they pour over the weir is terrific.

I'm feeling very lazy, and it's very hot. There isn't a cloud in the sky of burning blue. The gum-leaves shine as they catch the sun in the most extraordinary way. I like my straw hat; it has a wide brim and you can roll it up rather like an old-fashioned Panama, only it isn't! This heat doesn't make us feel as limp as the Sydney weather does, because the air is exhilarating. I hope the skipper will come along presently and tell us yarns of the old days on the river when barges came down with wool bales and wheat and gold—at least I don't know about the gold, but it sounds well. Sometimes you'd think we were coming to the end of the journey and the river. It just flows out on the level, among the gums, then come little hills. Sometimes we go between high white cliffs or red gorges, red as the earth and stone back at Mildura and Red Cliffs.

We're very tickled with some of the names on the maps, and those that people tell us of. There's Goodnight; Bell Bird Bore; Sunset Tank (ah, the sunsets, there's nothing like them), not to mention Dead Horse and Psyche Bend! There are names like Coboogla, Barmera, Lyrup, Pyap, and so on.

LATER.—The skipper *did* come and talk as I hoped. One of his yarns is that in the early days, when earls and settlers cleared, dug, and planted their little orchards side by side, as you might say, the locals divided society into three sections, known as Gold Knobs, Silvertails, and Copperbottoms. I'm afraid we're Copperbottoms.

Lots of love from your fond father.

Here their mother added a bit.

How are you darlings? [she wrote]. You must tell Michael and Helen all our news.

Yesterday we passed through some beautiful scenery. I shall never forget the grandeur of the tall cliffs and the tranquil lagoons and reaches of the river below that mirrored them, together with the deep-girthed gums. It's

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

a pleasure to see that people are proud of the trees here, and that a few young ones are growing up as the old ones die on the banks of this Old Man River of Australia, as they should do.

Daddy took two or three days over his letter, and this is a postscript. We won't have time to give you a full picture of this part of the country or of South Australia. We shall just pick out a few of the things that we think will interest you and leave the rest—a maze of orchards, people picking fruit, stooping over vines, school buses, bright skies, towns growing or being born, pumping stations, locks, and water rolling down over the weirs with a roar.

We saw a school bus this morning in the distance as we sailed along. These buses are very busy from about 8.15 a.m. onwards picking up a chattering crowd in the morning, dropping the cargo of little passengers in the afternoons after school—all very brown or freckled. Sometimes we've seen the children riding in on a slow pony—often two on the same horse—or on bicycles.

Heaps of love from Mummy and Daddy.

Peter and Anne were thrilled with this long letter and with the pictures and maps that came after it. But most of all they looked forward to the snaps of their father and mother on the upper deck of the little steamer wearing their straw sun-hats!

They were finding their first March in Australia very much warmer than any they'd known hitherto. In fact, as Peter said, you'd hardly guess it was March.

'Funny, isn't it, having autumn in March?' said Anne to Peter as they sat on the roof of the garage in the garden one Saturday afternoon.

'It's as windy as March is supposed to be at home,' answered Peter. 'Wonder when we'll have another letter.'

'You wouldn't think it was autumn though, would you? The trees aren't losing their leaves—at least only a few.'

'The Virginia creeper on the Library and at school is getting red. And the sea looks mistier in the mornings.'

Mrs MacNamara was sitting under the tree, and now she looked up. 'Wait till the coral-trees come out. They lose all their leaves first, and then have bright red flowers. March is the loveliest time of year in Sydney, I always think. You'll see, we generally

## DOWN THE MURRAY RIVER AND ON TO ADELAIDE

have a spell of still, sunny days, with that faint morning mist on the harbour.'

'Sometimes there's a fog, Mum,' put in Michael. 'Last year they had such a bad one that the Manly boats had to stop running.'

'That's rare, Mike. Of course, we have the autumn equinox and winds and rain. But we don't have London fogs!'

'Hooray, here's the postman,' shouted Peter, scrambling down from the roof to dash across to his friend at the gate. Sure enough, there was a letter for them.

After a number of comments and inquiries the letter went on:

The early mornings are cool, and we often come on deck at half-past five or six. Then the dew can be seen on lacy spider webs that stretch across grass and reeds. The air is soft, with a slight haze rising and light shimmering through it, giving it a pearly radiance. The birds sing and call most sweetly from passing trees and fences. We often see them feasting and singing in the orchards hung with dew as we pass. Or they take baths in the river with a great flurry of wings. Pelicans and black swans sail by, taking no notice of *The Gem*. The pelicans flap their great wings and fly slowly off if we come too near. We watch the sunsets lighting the landscape with their unearthly glow, but I love the early mornings best when a little wind blows, and birds, horses, and cattle are waking as the sun comes up, mysteriously; a brilliant golden ball.

Well, darlings, Renmark is quite a large town. Daddy and I felt a little cramped, so we went and had a round of golf on their eighteen-hole course. You can get golf, tennis, rowing, and swimming at all the river towns, which also have a very good institution of one late shopping night a week until 8.30 or 9 p.m.

If you look at the map, you'll see what a huge State South Australia is, touched on its borders by each of the other States, even by Queensland on its north-eastern tip. Renmark was the first irrigation settlement; Victoria lost her chance through political disputes. It lies on a kind of horseshoe made by the river, and far away stretches a vast and apparently limitless plain. There are the usual orchards and vineyards, houses and gardens, and the co-operative packing houses. I wish you could see the orange groves; even the leaves are fragrant. The candied orange and lemon peel round here is famous. We've heard and read of all kinds of strange things, such as that

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

the Smyrna figs aren't picked, but shaken to the ground, and the story of the strange little insect that fertilizes them and how it came to Australia from Turkey. Then there are the Frost Clubs, which exist to warn and help those in the frost belt. Frost warnings are given by local wireless or even telephone to individual owners. As winter approaches, thousands of frost-pots are prepared and set in the vineyards, one under each vine. When frost warnings come from the meteorological departments, perhaps at midnight, the men get up and go out to light up these crude oil heaters. Whole hillsides and valleys are lit up in this way, the heaters warming the air and preventing the frost from shrivelling the young fruit or buds. They must look like a network of glow-worms in the distance, under the bright stars on a frosty night.

Their father took up the story later.

We drove out to Lake Bonney and Berri. Bonney and Hawdon are well-known names round here for these two men were among the first, if not the very first, overlanders to come across country to Adelaide from Victoria with cattle, in the early 'forties of last century. We went over the factory and packing sheds at Berri, where the delectable crystallized fruit are treated and packed, and we have sent you some as well as to people at home. Our friend the skipper pointed out the Wolpunda water tower, 125 feet of it. It supplies a thousand square miles of arid South Australian mallee country with water for both household and stock use (and don't forget the squareness of the miles!). So a once-despised and useless countryside can now support sheep, cattle, wheat, and dairy-farms.

The skipper told us some funny yarns, and gave us a whole new vocabulary of river-slang. There's a great variety in tramps. Nowadays, sundowner means any outback wandering vagabond, traveller, or tramp. You'll remember Tufty told us that it used to mean a chap who dodged work by arriving at a station at sunset with a request for rations which he knew would never be refused, and which would still be given in the outback. It is, or was, quite usual for a tramp or a swaggie who hits a country town to offer to do a job such as chopping wood or weeding in return for some tucker (food) or an old pair of trousers. The skipper says that the term swagman is dying out; it's more often traveller or 'battler' now. The best word we've heard for one of these gentlemen is 'a never-sweat'. Another expression we've heard is 'a regular old riverbanker', but the best of all is 'Murrumbidgee whaler', meaning a specially lazy type belonging to the old days. He generally owned not a horse but a boat, and worked up and down the rivers. He just lay and slept in his boat, from time to time catching fish, which he exchanged

## DOWN THE MURRAY RIVER AND ON TO ADELAIDE

for tucker, and then drowns as he drifted along. I don't think there can be many of his sort about now.

The earth changed from red to grey before we reached Morgan, where we said good-bye to our kind skipper and the comfy little *Gem*. Of course we were taken to see the pride of the place, the Morgan-Whyalla pipe-line. This meanders along with the road round past the tip of Port Augusta, bringing water to Whyalla for the steel works there. It is 223 miles long and is mounted on concrete blocks all along the roadside. It also brings water to Port Pirie and Port Augusta for their smelting and blast furnaces. Water! The very word takes on deeper meaning here. It has a more urgent and blessed sound! Must catch post, so good-bye from both of us.

The next letter Peter and Anne read as they sat on the deck of the Manly Surfing Pavilion.

'Mmmm. They went by service car to Mannum,' read Peter. 'Another time to Angaston and Tanunda. Daddy says Tanunda port wine is famous. Seems to be in ecstasies over Australian wine, says it's a pity people in England never get a taste of the better ones. Here you are.' He passed the sheets to Anne.

Angaston and Tanunda are two towns with an interesting story of pioneering days [Anne read]. Angaston is named after a Scot, George Fife Angas, who with Gouger, Light, and others, was among the men who founded South Australia in December 1836. Angas helped to bring out a band of German vine-workers who wanted to escape religious persecution in Silesia. They made fine settlers and many of the wine districts in South Australia still have a slightly foreign air. Their descendants have fought with us in the two wars. Many secrets of vine cultivation and wine-making came with those German settlers, who at first worked for others, helping to clear the land, planting the first crops. But gradually they set up on their own. The name of one of those Germans was Seppelt. To-day Seppelt's wines and vaults are famous, throughout Australia at any rate. Some of the wealthier English and Scots settlers also brought out vines from France and Germany. In Angaston, Tanunda, Clare, the vineyards cluster round the sunny hill-sides, and we spent some interesting days watching the grapes being picked and crushed, and in going over the vaults where the wine is stored in huge wooden casks and vats.

We travelled quickly by car from Morgan to the Mount Lofty Ranges, [wrote Mrs Newsome], and so to Adelaide, to find the beautiful little city leaning against the ranges, drowsing in the late afternoon sun. It's still very hot, a hundred in the shade to-day, in spite of autumn being not far off.

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

Daddy and I are enthusiastic over Adelaide, it's such a compact well-laid-out little city, named after Queen Adelaide, wife of William IV. Its beauty and style are due to South Australia's first Surveyor-General, Colonel Light, who planned it, no doubt remembering the great squares of London, such as Bedford Square and Fitzroy Square. Like another Surveyor working at the same time in N.S.W. he had served in the Spanish Wars of the Peninsula under Wellington. It was Mitchell of N.S.W. who traced the course of the Murray from N.S.W. right across Victoria, besides fixing the spot where Australia's two longest rivers, the Murray and Murrumbidgee, join.

But I must stop this historical chat. We'll soon be back to tell you all about it ourselves. Unfortunately we shan't have time to travel on the great Stuart Highway, the new great motor road built during the war; I mean the one that links Alice Springs with the Northern Territory over two thousand miles away, one of Australia's wartime achievements.

## *Chapter 15*

### AN AUTUMN EASTER HOLIDAY

Their father and mother came back from the Murray and Adelaide a few days later. Over and over again the children asked to be told about different things: the wine vats, the grapes, the boat, the pelicans filling baggy beaks with fish, the beautiful house with the lovely old table silver they had visited in Adelaide.

Subtly the days changed to autumn as the end of March approached. There was no sudden onset of cold, and darkness fell no earlier yet. Except where English trees and orchards were cultivated, there were no bright coppery or burnished leaves to light the days. The willow-tree turned yellow, the coral-trees lost their leaves and the flowers turned from rose to scarlet on their brown branches as April advanced to Easter. The term wore on towards the holidays which they were all to spend on a farm in the Burraborang Valley.

Michael was in training, as he was in the school eight, and Shore enters for the Great Public Schools annual boat race on the Nepean outside Sydney. For this important event Mr MacNamara came down to Balmoral, as well as for the Royal Agricultural Show, which takes place every Easter. The house was to be stretched to its full capacity. Michael and Helen took this in their stride and were busy rigging up extra camp beds and stretchers and telescoping bedroom arrangements for some days beforehand. Helen had been allowed to enter for one of the riding events on Children's Day at the show, and her own pony, her darling Billy Boy, came on the long journey to Sydney to help her win the second prize. To win even second prize is a great achievement, for the Sydney show is the big stock-breeders' and agricultural event of the year not only for New South Wales but for the whole of Australia. It was a tremendous excitement for Helen and the MacNamara clan. The Newsomes went to watch with the family, and Peter and Anne felt they had

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

some of the reflected glory. The day after the show they were on the road to Burragorang by half-past seven in the morning.

Their route took them over the Bridge and on past the towsted clustering houses round Surry Hills and the university, and so to Parramatta, where they passed King's School set in its wide English-looking park near the river. Its main building is still known as Old Government House, for it was built in the early days as a country house for the Governor. They found a milkman who directed them to the road passing Elizabeth Farm, where the first Australian merinos were bred by John MacArthur—Helen and Michael were most interested in this. Then they branched off, crossing little Lansdowne Bridge, built and designed by a craftsman from Gloucestershire in 1834 under Sir Thomas Mitchell. It is one of the few stone-arched bridges in Australia, the majority being of wood, steel, or concrete. They stopped at Cobbitty, and Mrs Newsome was delighted with the long, low farmhouse with its bricked garden path where they had lunch. A pear-tree laden with heavy, golden fruit stood outside the window, and apples and quinces were still on the trees standing in tall grass where the birds sang. They passed English sweetbriar that had run wild, tall hawthorn trees already red with berries, and they learned that blackberries liked the climate so well that they are a 'notifiable pest'. To Michael and Helen, coming as they did from the plains of the north-west, all this was unusual and new. They found some ti-tree bushes and picked a branch covered with tiny flowers like miniature peach-blossom, crushing the small leaves for their perfume.

They reached the entrance to Burragorang Valley late in the afternoon and were surprised at its steepness. Because of the countryside they had left, with its low golden-green hills, wild sweetbriar and quiet cattle, Anne and her mother had pictured a little valley that you could take in at a glance, cultivated and smooth like the ones in England. But they found themselves going down a steep declivity with wild rocky gorges on either side, and ragged hills or mountains completely covered with dark trees rising steeply in the distance. As they drove along the rough winding track above the Wollondilly River, which reflected the hills and trees and green slopes, there seemed no end to the



*The South Australian Tourist and Publicity Bureau Adelaide.*



*The Australian News and Information Bureau*

*In an orange grove at Renmark, famous for candied fruit peel* **BELOW** *One of the oldest houses in Australia, Elizabeth Farm, where the first Australian merinos were bred*



*The South Australian Tourist and Publicity Bureau, Adelaide.  
Two views of the beautiful, compact little city of Adelaide, named after the English  
Queen, wife of William IV*

## AN AUTUMN EASTER HOLIDAY

Burraborang. They were bound for Mrs Ripston's farm at the other end and found it to be about ten miles on. The road ended at a shallow ford where the river ran below the garden fence on the opposite bank, and somewhat gingerly Mr Newsome drove through the water, wondering aloud how the new car would stand up to the stony bottom and mud.

Mrs Ripston was waiting for them at the gate and led them up to the house, talking rapidly all the time.

'Tea's ready. I expect you'd all like a good strong cup. Or would the girls prefer milk? Regular old bushwhackers we are,' she added noticing Anne and Peter looking round. 'Dad used to add a room when we needed it.'

The house was unpainted weatherboard, with what seemed innumerable rooms on both sides of the long passage, whose inside walls, as well as those of the dining-room, were of plain varnished wood, showing all the knots. Their bedrooms were white. The bathroom was a lean-to on a back veranda.

Next morning they were out before breakfast. The air had a slight nip in it, though the sun was quite warm. To Anne and Peter the country looked very wild in spite of the farms round about, or rather the farms that they guessed were there because of the cows. The hillsides, which were covered with pasture and a few trees, or just 'bush', sloped towards the high banks of the river. They were not allowed to go in until they were shown exactly where to bathe, and where not to go because of a deep hole or a snag. There was fishing too, and they watched Mr Ripston bring in a large fish, and helped him take it back for breakfast. They got their feet soaked with heavy dew.

There were plenty of horses about, and the visitors were glad of their riding-things. 'If only we could have brought Billy Boy,' sighed Helen. 'How he would have enjoyed a roll and a gallop on this nice green grass. I could have taken him for a swim near the ford.'

They made up a riding party that afternoon. First there was the job of catching and saddling the horses, who knew all the tricks of going off at a trot just as someone came up with a halter, especially a stranger. At last, however, they were all mounted, and the family and guests gathered to watch the

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

cavalcade start off. Peter's animal, a black horse, determined to give trouble from the beginning. He had decided that he didn't want to cross the river that day, and knowing he had a stranger on his back who wasn't quite at home there he put up a splendid performance in the middle of the shallow stream at the ford, jibbing and kicking, and refusing to move. Peter stuck to him firmly, with a set face, as he tried to urge him over.

'Oh, musha, isn't he wicked?' said old Mrs Ripston, delighted, shouting, 'Go on over now, Nigger, go on over with you.' But Nigger only laid his ears back and kicked.

'Hit him. Hit him hard,' shouted someone else. Peter dug his heels in and gave him a cut with the switch he held.

'Och, shure, you've never hit him at all. Give him a good clout and be done with it,' called Uncle Pat.

'Let him feel it on the rump,' called out young Joe Ripston.

Helen now cantered back to see what was the matter. 'Grip him with your knees and give him two or three good cuts. Or shall I come and catch him by the bridle?'

'No, thanks,' shouted Peter, who was trying to do what everyone told him and getting rather embarrassed at having so many people watching him.

Mr Ripston, hearing the commotion, now appeared. 'Go and get some spurs, Joe,' he said, 'and throw them over.'

'Mind out now, he'll never catch at that distance. Shure, he doesn't know the tricks of that animal. What did you give him to the boy at all for?' said the old woman. Pat soon had his boots off and waded out to Peter, spurs in hand.

'I've never used spurs,' he said as he leaned down to take them, just as Nigger lifted up his heels and let fly.

'Hit him with them,' called the others from the bank.

'Give him a clout on the rump, lower down. Hold on now and sit back. He'll be off the minute he feels them,' called Mr Ripston.

Peter lifted the spurs, conscious that Helen and Michael were watching him on the other bank. He brought them down with a thump in a most unorthodox manner, but evidently in the right place, for Nigger gave a snort and a plunge and was across the river and up the bank in a few seconds. Peter thought, 'Now he's going to bolt,' as he felt the powerful pull on the bit, and

## AN AUTUMN EASTER HOLIDAY

gripped hard. But to his surprise Nigger came to a sudden stop in front of a low bank on the other side against which he had unknowingly pulled him. One more cut, and Peter was master of the situation; Nigger gave little more trouble that day. They had some good rides after that, even though the wily Nigger generally tried to turn for home after two or three miles.

They rode sometimes in the early morning, sometimes in the late afternoon, exploring the bush at their end of the valley. Sometimes they went along the sloping hillsides or the crest of the high river-bank among the whispering she-oaks, or they would follow Michael and Helen in a game of figure-of-eight in and out among the big gum-trees in some grassy glade. Once they found a group of beehives in the middle of the bush, and Joe, who was with them, explained that a friend of theirs had a number of small leases for beehives scattered round the district for miles, and that he spent several months of each year going round to look after his bees and taking the honey.

'I suppose it tastes of wattle and gum-blossom,' said Helen.

'Yeah. And then there's all the fruit-trees about. We have a couple of orange-trees and a lemon. You've eaten some, I expect. Some of it's rather dark.'

'Let's have a canter,' said Peter coming up on Nigger.

'Betcher can't ride lying down on yer horse's back,' said Joe, doing so. They chased each other shouting, then rode in silence for awhile, each one alone, separated by their horses. Indeed, there was enough to do in riding your own animal, for they were off the track altogether, and it was necessary to keep a sharp look-out for holes, stones, stumps, or overhanging branches. Peter was surprised to hear pigeons. The boys said they were the local bronze-wings which had flown over from the other side of the valley. The riders pulled up and watched them. The smooth feathers in the sunlight gleamed with metallic dark greens shot with rosy-purple that fitted over the brownish-grey feathers like a coat of fine silk. Then there were parrots and parrakeets. They disturbed numbers as they rode under the trees; a flash of colour and they were gone. One might *almost* call a parrot a bright airy spirit, until it flies off with a harsh screech. One day Joe led them to a wide glade of deep-girthed

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

gums where they surprised flocks of them in unimaginably bright colours that showed vividly against the dark leaves—a whirl of vivid emerald, of deep blue and scarlet, or the softer blue-green of a few budgerigars, as they flew off.

Some, less timid, stayed nibbling the gum-nuts or sprays of leaves they held in their claws, cocking their heads to look at the intruders, then continuing their nibbling and soft chattering noises. Anne was fascinated with two blue and scarlet parrots, each holding a spray in one claw, nibbling and swaying on the branch, while their sharply curved beaks and strange round tongues—each like a tiny marble—worked away on the nut. A smaller parrakeet, liveried in emerald, flew from a tree as the blue and scarlet pair dropped their nuts and swung overhead with a screech.

'Oh, look, look at him, Helen,' called Peter staring upwards. 'Look at the wings, blue underneath when they open and bright red on top. Look, look underneath, and their blue tail feathers.'

'There's a green one, Anne, quick, look. His wings are red underneath.' They spoke in low tones, but Joe told them to keep quiet as several more flew upwards out of the trees, curving, turning in a parabola as they swooped against the dark leaves.

Joe said: 'Mountain lories, Blue Mountain lories they are. We aren't far from the Blue Mountains. They'll whistle beautifully if you tame them. Keep still and I'll show you somethin'. You wait here.'

He rode over into a small glade and began to whistle a peculiarly clear sweet note. For about five minutes he called and whistled, while the horses swished their tails with impatience. Joe went on softly whistling, and presently there came short answering notes; first one bright bird and then another flashed towards him until the little grove was alive with sound. From the centre, Joe looked round smiling as a bright-green parrakeet swooped close to his face and grazed his horse's ear. Outside the circle, astride their horses, the others watched, enchanted. It wasn't a continuous note, or a song, but a succession of clear notes very like Joe's whistling, which made it sound the more airy and strange. Joe stopped and walked his horse back, and

## AN AUTUMN EASTER HOLIDAY

the birds flew away. He told them that sometimes a dozen would come and fly round. Once one had sat on Pluto's mane, and they sometimes perched on his shoulder, if he was alone.

They rode on and saw more parrakeets, bright green with underwings of primrose and red. There were a few white cockatoos as well as some grey ones which flew off with screams and in a confusion of white wings and yellow crests standing on end. Joe called them 'cockies' and said they are very like gang-gangs, small grey cockatoos that sit in groups on the trees chattering as they pick and nibble the gum-nuts, down in the southern alps at Kosciuscko.

But it was time to turn, and once more they rode through the magical glade, where the bright parrots flew in their astonishing liveries of green and rose, grey and blue. That evening near a little gully, they heard the bell-birds calling at sunset, ringing their little silver bells.

One morning when they returned from an early ride, two boys of about twelve and fourteen, cousins of Joe's, asked if they would like to come 'up the creek'. Any excuse is a good one for a picnic if the day is fine, so they asked permission at once. Mrs Ripston cut sandwiches and gave them little buns, and a large bag of oranges. She asked where they were going.

'Up towards the gap,' the boys said. 'We could get the service car down this afternoon at half-past four.'

Mrs Ripston warned them not to get lost. 'Now mind you make sure of that service car,' she said, 'and don't be late for tea. It gets dark early now among the hills.'

They set off, and someone gave them a lift in a cart for some distance. Anne noticed that he, too, was very interested to find out where they were going.

'Don't you kids get lost,' he said as he pulled up for them to jump down. 'Your Dad would be that angry if youse was to go and lose yourselves.' One of their cousins came along next and gave the party a lift to the river further on, and he too warned them to keep an eye on the sun and not get lost, asking which gully they were going to. Round near the far end of the river, the boys said.

Lem and Jim led the way to a half-dried watercourse among

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

whose damp stones ferns and moss grew, and where the light was a green gloom. There were few birds and the silence increased. They had lunch near a small rocky pool, sucking their oranges for a drink. They found a narrow little track alongside the rocky boulders and up this they went, crossing the watercourse near what would have been a fall in a wet season. So they reached the open slopes of the hillside, covered with slippery tussocks of grass, still going uphill. Anne felt that if she looked down she might go sliding to the bottom, which seemed a terrifically long way below. They all sat down for a rest, looking across the valley to the lonely mountains for miles.

'Phew, hot work. I'm sopping,' said Michael. 'Oughtn't we to be nearly at the top by now?' Jim said they ought to find the path to the top soon. It was nearly four.

Michael stood against a tree and looked up. 'It looks a long way up still. Are you sure there's a path to the top?' he asked.

Jim pointed to the forbidding-looking slopes where the sun still shone. 'There *should* be a path,' he said.

'But do you two really know where you're taking us? Look here, Jim, have you ever been up this way before?' persisted Mike. Jim had to admit that they hadn't, but he was sure they were in the right direction.

Mike looked at his watch. 'We won't get up by four or even half-past. I think we'd better start to go back the way we came; that is if we can.' He looked grave.

Peter fished his compass out of his pocket, whilst Michael showed Anne how to place her foot sideways against the tussocks of grass so that she would not slip. He then took the lead, making Jim walk at the tail of the little party. They were glad when the steep slopes of slippery grass were left behind, and stumbled on, jumping down ledges, getting scratched and grubby. Once the floor of a sort of cave gave way beneath Lem's and Peter's weight and they dropped about eight feet. Anne and Helen were tired, Anne a little frightened now that the sun had gone behind the hills on the opposite side of the gorge, and the wildness of a lonely chill evening closed in upon them. Still, she and Helen told each other it was a terrific adventure, whereupon Michael told Helen rather shortly not to be a silly ass.

## AN AUTUMN EASTER HOLIDAY

On they went, down and down, in the gathering gloom. At last they could hear the sound of trickling water, and looked for the tiny path they had climbed up at midday. It was too dark to see it down there, under the trees, for they had nearly reached the creek bed again after much scrambling over boulders. They sat down for a breather, and Mike suggested that they should give a shout. They all joined in with a good long Australian Coo-oo-eee. There was no answer, only the echoes. About twenty minutes later they tried again.

As the long triple echo died away, they heard answering calls, and saw lights bobbing about lower down.

'We can't go wrong now,' said Jim. 'Keep going.'

After another ten minutes there was a call close by.

'That's my Dad,' said Lem, as they draped themselves on the least uncomfortable stones they could find, and waited for him to come up.

'You'll get it,' said Jim to Lem.

'I won't,' defiantly from Lem.

'Too right you will. You see, your Dad will be wild.'

'So will yours. You've torn your trousers.'

It was now pitch dark and they looked up at the stars as from the bottom of a pit. The calls came closer, and they answered most of them, so that the gorges rang. Presently Lem's father loomed up out of the blackness, swinging a lantern.

'Here we are, Dad,' called Lem, feeling uneasy in spite of what he'd just been saying.

'What've you kids been doing?' said Mr Ripston sternly. 'Whole district out looking for you since half-past six. What did you come up here for?'

'There's a path up to the top, Dad. We were going to get the four o'clock car from there.'

Helen and Anne looked at each other but neither ventured a word. Lem's father turned, put his hands to his mouth and gave a great shout, evidently a pre-arranged signal to let the other searchers know. Then he held up his lantern to study the tired dishevelled little party. Lem had cut his leg, Anne and Helen had scratched legs and arms, Peter had torn his shirt and cut his cheek. 'Well, don't go looking for paths you've never

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

seen in future. You ask me before you go off another time, I've told you that before. I didn't know you'd gone up the creek till your mother got worried. You deserve a hiding when you get home, both of you,' he added sternly. 'And you'll get one.'

Lem, looking miserable and thoroughly ashamed of having got the whole party lost, slipped into the shadows so that no one would see the two fat tears that rolled down his cheeks, but Anne, who like all the rest of them was hungry and overtired, burst into loud sobs.

Lem's father grunted, patted her on the back, told her not to cry, and produced a large, white, clean handkerchief for her. 'Better sit down a few minutes,' he said, opened a basket, handed out oranges all round, and began to peel one for Anne. 'Where are you, Lem?' he called, 'I expect you're all pretty hungry. Did you have anything for tea?'

'N-no, we only took lunch; we thought we'd pick up the s-s-service car,' said Lem, coming over.

'Here you are, son, have your orange,' said Mr Ripston. 'There's cups of hot milk and soup in the thermos flasks and bread and butter for you all waiting by the road at the river.' He set the lantern on a stone, handed them each a thick sandwich, and remarked that Mr Newsome ought to be along soon.

'Mr Ripston, please don't punish Lem and Jim,' said Helen suddenly.

'Oh, please!' said Anne. They all stopped sucking their oranges and waited for him to say something.

'You should have known better than to try and go up there,' answered Mr Ripston, 'but I reckon you've both had a good fright. I don't expect you'll do it again, will you?'

'No, never,' answered the two culprits so earnestly that Mr Ripston laughed outright.

But he became stern again as he watched the lights flickering about below. 'You'd no *business* to get lost. You ought to know better, but I'll let you off this once.' He stretched out a large hand and holding the lantern high surveyed the boy. 'That's a fine cut you've got on your knee.' He fished in his pocket and brought out a first-aid kit. 'Anyone else wanting repairs? Your cheek, Pete? And Anne, too, come along.' They were surprised

## AN AUTUMN EASTER HOLIDAY

to see how gently and skilfully the big bushman bandaged them up. Mr Newsome now appeared and Anne and Peter suddenly felt as guilty as the others at having been lost.

They started off for the long walk back, Mr Ripston holding young Lem's hand. It took them two hours to reach the flat by the river road. Anne was half-asleep and kept tightly hold of her father's hand. She vaguely saw that Lem was picked up and put on a pony, and heard someone else saying he'd brought the big horse with a padded saddle in case anyone was hurt. Men now seemed to Peter to be appearing from all directions out of the shadows, there were murmurs of 'Good-oh', 'All safe', they arrived, they parted, and they dissolved into the mist, and the silent bush swallowed them up as the sound of wheels and hooves died away. Anne and Helen were dimly aware of someone taking a hand of each as they emerged from the blackness of the gorge. The ground was too rough for the men to attempt to carry them. Presently they found themselves sitting on the big horse, Anne riding pillion. Mrs Newsome was waiting for them in the car, and they were all quickly packed in for the drive back.

Mrs Ripston had the house lit, and a long table set with a hot meal for the hungry searchers. There were boiling bowls of bread and milk for each of the children. Peter fell asleep over his tomato pie. Mrs. Ripston said they could just drop into bed as they were, but Mrs Newsome thought they'd be stiffer than ever next day unless they had the hot baths that were ready for them. Then they slept the round of the clock.

There were no more long walks after that but Lem and Jim took them to their particular bathing place in the river, and showed them (from a safe distance) a wild bees' hive. The last day and the last ride came all too soon, and that evening they lay with Lem and Jim and Joe on the grass above the river and watched water-insects and dragon-flies skimming across it.

Next morning they made an early start for Sydney. Old Dad and Mr and Mrs Ripston came down with the boys to see them over the ford, waving good-bye as they turned on to the stony road. At the top of the gorge Mr Newsome stopped, and they looked at the wide green slopes spread out behind them, topped by the forbidding sides of cliffs and No-Go Creek,

## THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN AUSTRALIA

'Well,' said Anne. 'It looks awful, doesn't it? I wonder how far we really did get. Did you know that was a wallaby track we went up by, Mike?'

'No, was it?' said Mike. Helen felt sure she could see the very ledge they were on but Michael thought it too far away to tell. Mrs Newsome said she would not like to spend such an anxious night again.

When they arrived back in Sydney the days in the Burragorang hung like a dream in the back of their minds for a long time. The new term stretched before them, with homework and tennis, hockey and football, on to the winter and next holidays.

Peter looked forward further still. 'Next September hols,' he said, 'two or three of the chaps from school are going on a hiking tour. We could take our blueys and a dog and go to Oberon or Kurrajong Heights or somewhere.'

His father said somewhat drily that after No-Go Creek he could make his mind easy, there'd be no hiking tour without someone who thoroughly knew the way.

'And some day we want to see the Great Barrier Reef, Daddy,' said Anne in her clear, high voice.

But it is time to say good-bye to them all. You have only seen a part of Australia with them—nothing of the Never-Never country or the burning flame and purple of the Macdonnell Ranges in Central Australia with its cattle stations. Yet in their nine months they had seen a good deal of the distant Dominion, and settled down at school, which they found to be not so very different from an English one. Had they lived in the country, or had their father been managing an outlying sheep or cattle station, they would have noticed a much sharper difference in the life, as indeed they had when visiting Helen and Michael in the north-west of N.S.W.

We leave them as they are settling into the house overlooking the sea, as so many houses in Sydney do. How lucky they are to have one. Anne is trying the new swing, and Peter is digging up some weeds in the garden. The roses are in flower and shining against the blue sea.

# INDEX

- 
- ADELAIDE** (South Australia), 38, 131,  
 141-142, 143  
 Airports . . . . . 37, 131  
 Albany . . . . . 13, 31, 37  
 Albury . . . . . 135, 137  
 Angaston . . . . . 141  
 Angas, George Fife . . . . . 141  
 Animals, 27, 29, 55, 60, 87, 111, 117,  
 119, 123-124, 125, 126-127  
 Ants . . . . . 26, 44-45, 79, 94  
 Apricots . . . . . 15, 33, 43, 134  
 Arago, Jacques . . . . . 104  
 Argonauts . . . . . 82  
 Armidale . . . . . 20, 81, 90, 93, 95  
 Art galleries . . . . . 51, 82, 132  
 Australian Alps . . . . . 50  
 — Broadcasting Commission, 81, 82  
 — Capital Territory . . . . . 81  
  
**BALLARAT** . . . . . 53, 81  
 Balmoral, 38, 63, 66, 70, 75, 77, 78,  
 102, 107  
 Bananas . . . . . 94, 95  
 Barmera . . . . . 137  
 Baths, mineral . . . . . 30  
 —, swimming . . . . . 21  
 Bathurst . . . . . 103, 109  
 Batman, John . . . . . 50  
 Bees . . . . . 124, 147, 153  
 Bell Bird Bore . . . . . 137  
 — birds . . . . . 20, 48, 52, 53  
 Bendigo . . . . . 53, 81, 103  
 Berri . . . . . 134, 140  
 Billy tea, 40-41, 44, 46, 47, 51,  
 52, 60, 121, 126, 129  
 Bird and animal sanctuaries 27, 60  
 — dances . . . . . 31, 53-54, 54-55  
 Birds, 12, 20, 22, 25, 27, 31, 32, 34-35,  
 38, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53-54, 55, 56,  
 100, 111, 112, 128-129, 139, 143,  
 147, 148, 149  
 Blackberries . . . . . 144  
 Black-boy palms . . . . . 28, 29  
 — fellows . . . . . 127-128, 130  
 Blackheath . . . . . 108  
 Blaxland, Gregory . . . . . 108  
 Bligh, Admiral William . . . . . 83  
 Blue Mountains . . . . . 53, 103, 108  
 Bluebottles . . . . . 74-75  
 Bluey . . . . . 57, 58, 59  
 Boating . . . . . 100-101  
 Bondi . . . . . 75  
 Bonney, Charles . . . . . 140  
 Boronia (flower) . . . . . 19-20, 21  
 Botanical Gardens . . . . . 51, 63, 64  
 Botany Bay . . . . . 62, 83  
 Bougainvillea (creeper) . . . . . 133  
 Boulder . . . . . 37  
*Bounty*, H.M.S. . . . . 83  
 Bourke, Sir Richard . . . . . 104  
 Bower-bird . . . . . 49, 53, 54, 55-56  
 Bracebridge-Wilson Hall . . . . . 61  
 Bridges, 18, 42, 66, 71, 94, 101, 104,  
 144  
 Brisbane (Queensland), 81, 90, 93,  
 94, 96  
 — River . . . . . 94  
 —, Sir T. M. . . . . 94  
 Broadcasting . . . . . 81-82, 133, 140  
 Brolgas (birds) . . . . . 31, 38  
 Broome . . . . . 30  
 Budgerigars . . . . . 112, 129, 148  
 Bundaberg . . . . . 130  
 Burrigorang . . . . . 144-154  
 Burrinjuck dam . . . . . 92  
 Bush, 21-22, 42, 44, 49, 71, 100, 108,  
 111, 122, 135, 145  
 — fires . . . . . 33, 47-48, 82  
 — schools . . . . . 36, 82  
 Bushmen . . . . . 57-59, 153  
 Bushmen's Carnival . . . . . 129-130  
 Bushrangers . . . . . 49, 53  
  
**CAMPING** . . . . . 58, 90, 98, 105, 107  
 Canberra (Australian Capital  
 Territory) . . . . . 81  
 Casino . . . . . 129  
 Casuarina-trees . . . . . 112  
 Cattle-drafting . . . . . 111, 129, 130  
 Caves . . . . . 53, 109  
 Chaffey brothers . . . . . 133, 136  
*Challenger*, H.M.S. . . . . 31  
 Cherry, wild . . . . . 95  
 — orchards . . . . . 109  
 Christmas, 22, 39, 65, 68, 84, 90-91,  
 97-101

|                                                                                                            |                       |                                                                                                  |                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cicadas (insects)                                                                                          | 79-80, 85             | ELIZABETH BAY HOUSE                                                                              | 104                 |
| Cinema                                                                                                     | 131                   | Emu Plains                                                                                       | 103, 108            |
| Circular Quay, Sydney                                                                                      | 62, 102               | Emus (birds)                                                                                     | 128-129             |
| Clapp, Sir Harold                                                                                          | 96                    | <i>Endeavour</i> , H.M.S.                                                                        | 83                  |
| Clare (South Australia)                                                                                    | 141                   | Erosion of soil                                                                                  | 27, 94              |
| Clarence River                                                                                             | 92, 95                | Eucalyptus-trees, see <i>Gum-trees</i>                                                           |                     |
| Clematis                                                                                                   | 52, 56, 93            | Evans, George                                                                                    | 109                 |
| Climate, 19, 22, 27, 38, 40, 64, 80-81,<br>94, 95, 115-116, 123, 131, 132,<br>135, 137, 138, 139, 141, 143 |                       | Everlasting flowers                                                                              | 32, 33              |
| Cobb & Co.'s coach                                                                                         | 103-104               | Exams                                                                                            | 78, 81, 84, 90, 131 |
| Cobbitty                                                                                                   | 144                   | FAIRBRIDGE FARM SCHOOL                                                                           | 36                  |
| Coboogla                                                                                                   | 137                   | Felton Bequest                                                                                   | 51                  |
| Cockatoos                                                                                                  | 35, 112, 149          | Fenner, Charles                                                                                  | 27                  |
| Coff's Harbour                                                                                             | 96                    | Ferns                                                                                            | 42, 43, 52, 93      |
| Como                                                                                                       | 24                    | Ferntree Gully                                                                                   | 51, 52              |
| Conservatorium of Music<br>(Sydney)                                                                        | 64, 78                | Ferry-boats                                                                                      | 16, 63, 95, 102     |
| Coogee                                                                                                     | 73, 75                | Fish                                                                                             | 24, 51, 109, 136    |
| Cook, Captain James                                                                                        | 62, 83                | Fish River                                                                                       | 109                 |
| Cooktown                                                                                                   | 93                    | Fishing                                                                                          | 95, 140, 145        |
| Coolgardie                                                                                                 | 36, 37                | Flamingoes                                                                                       | 31                  |
| Coonamble                                                                                                  | 112                   | Flannel flowers                                                                                  | 34                  |
| Cootamundra                                                                                                | 103                   | Flinders, Captain Matthew                                                                        | 65                  |
| 'Copperbottoms'                                                                                            | 137                   | Flowers, 14, 19-21, 28, 29, 32, 33, 34,<br>52, 56, 60, 66, 92, 94, 95, 97, 112,<br>114, 124, 133 |                     |
| Coral                                                                                                      | 24                    | Flying-foxes                                                                                     | 124-125             |
| Coral-trees                                                                                                | 100, 138, 143         | Football                                                                                         | 79                  |
| Corio Bay                                                                                                  | 60                    | Forbes                                                                                           | 103                 |
| Cormorants (birds)                                                                                         | 25                    | Forbes, Lady Amelia                                                                              | 104                 |
| Cottesloe beach                                                                                            | 16, 18                | Fremantle                                                                                        | 13-17, 18, 30, 38   |
| Cox, William                                                                                               | 108                   | —, Captain Charles                                                                               | 31                  |
| Crawley                                                                                                    | 18, 19-20, 21         | Frost clubs                                                                                      | 140                 |
| Cricket                                                                                                    | 60, 79, 105-107       | Fruit, 15, 30, 33, 42, 43, 94, 95, 96,<br>97, 109, 118, 121, 123, 133, 134,<br>141, 144, 147     |                     |
| Curl-Curl                                                                                                  | 66, 70, 71, 72, 75-77 | Fruit-canning                                                                                    | 44                  |
| Currants                                                                                                   | 133                   | —, crystallized                                                                                  | 140                 |
| Cygnets Bay                                                                                                | 31                    | Fruit-growing                                                                                    | 43-44               |
| DAIRY FARMS, 57, 95, 129, 135, 140                                                                         |                       | GALAHS (birds)                                                                                   | 112                 |
| Dampier, William                                                                                           | 31-32                 | Gardens                                                                                          | 24, 61, 64, 94      |
| Dandenong Ranges, 39, 42, 43, 44,<br>48, 49, 103                                                           |                       | Geelong                                                                                          | 60, 84              |
| Darling Downs                                                                                              | 103                   | Gipps, Sir George                                                                                | 104                 |
| — Point                                                                                                    | 91                    | Gippsland                                                                                        | 39, 49, 103         |
| — Ranges                                                                                                   | 22                    | Glen Innes                                                                                       | 95                  |
| — River                                                                                                    | 111                   | Gloucester Park                                                                                  | 14, 15              |
| —, Sir Ralph                                                                                               | 104                   | Glow-worms                                                                                       | 53, 140             |
| Darwin                                                                                                     | 92                    | Gold                                                                                             | 36, 53, 109         |
| Dead Horse                                                                                                 | 137                   | 'Gold Knobs'                                                                                     | 137                 |
| Deakin, Alfred                                                                                             | 133, 136              | Goodnight                                                                                        | 137                 |
| Deewhy                                                                                                     | 66                    | Goondiwindi                                                                                      | 129                 |
| <i>Dot and the Kangaroo</i>                                                                                | 31, 98-99             | Gouger, Robert                                                                                   | 141                 |
| Dragon-flies                                                                                               | 123, 153              | Grafton                                                                                          | 94-95               |
| Dubbo                                                                                                      | 103, 111, 129         | Grapefruit                                                                                       | 15, 33              |

- Grapes . . . . . 133, 141  
 Great Australian Bight . . . . . 38  
 — Barrier Reef . . . . . 24, 154  
 — Western Road . . . . . 108  
 Greenway, Francis . . . . . 104  
 Guildford airport . . . . . 37  
 Gum-trees (eucalyptus), 12, 20-21,  
 22, 25, 43, 50, 53, 72, 109, 121,  
 124, 125, 132, 133, 135, 137, 148  
 Gundagai . . . . . 103  
 Gwydir Highway . . . . . 95  
 — River . . . . . 123  
  
 HARGRAVES, Edward . . . . . 109  
 Hawdon, Joseph . . . . . 140  
 Hawkesbury River . . . . . 92, 130  
 — wild flower sanctuary . . . . . 131  
 Hayes, Sir Henry B. . . . . 102-103  
 Healesville . . . . . 43, 60  
 Hill, Ernestine . . . . . 136  
 Honey . . . . . 147  
 Hot springs . . . . . 129  
 Houses, 38, 44, 49, 67, 68, 72, 77, 94,  
 95, 102-103, 104, 113-114, 133,  
 143, 144, 145  
 Hovell, A. W. . . . . 50  
 Hume, A. H. . . . . 50  
 — Reservoir . . . . . 137  
 Hydro-electric scheme . . . . . 95, 111  
  
 IBIS (birds) . . . . . 112  
 Insects, 21, 24, 26, 32, 44-45, 53, 55,  
 79-80, 94, 123, 124, 140, 147, 153  
 Inverell . . . . . 129  
 Irrigation, 111, 132, 133, 135, 136-  
 137, 139, 140  
  
 JACARANDAS (trees) . . . . . 95, 132  
 Jelly-fish . . . . . 102  
 Jenolan caves . . . . . 53, 109  
  
 KALGOORLIE . . . . . 36, 37  
 Kalista . . . . . 44  
 Kangaroo Island . . . . . 38  
 — paws (flowers) . . . . . 14, 21  
 Kangaroos, 31, 35, 60, 117, 126-127  
 Katoomba . . . . . 108  
 King's Cross . . . . . 91  
 King's Park . . . . . 16, 18, 20-22, 34  
 King's School . . . . . 144  
 Kirribilli . . . . . 66  
 Koala bears . . . . . 53, 60  
 Kookaburras (birds) . . . . . 34-35  
 Kosciuszko . . . . . 95, 149  
  
 Kurrajong Heights . . . . . 154  
  
 LA PEROUSE . . . . . 62  
 Lake Bonney . . . . . 140  
 Lambert, George . . . . . 51, 61  
 Laughing Jackass, see *Kookaburra*  
 Launceston (Tasmania) . . . . . 81  
 Lawson, William . . . . . 108  
 Leeches . . . . . 55  
 Leschenaultias (flowers), . . . . . 22, 28, 34  
 Libraries, 51, 65, 86-87, 88-89, 131,  
 132  
 Light, Colonel William . . . . . 141, 142  
 Lindsay, Lionel . . . . . 51  
 Lismore . . . . . 129  
 Liverpool Plain . . . . . 103  
 Local Authorities . . . . . 87  
 Lories (birds) . . . . . 148  
 Lyre-bird, 20, 49, 51, 52, 53-54, 55,  
 56  
 Lyrup . . . . . 137  
  
 MACARTHUR, John . . . . . 144  
 — Donnell Range . . . . . 92, 154  
 Macquarie, Lachlan . . . . . 104  
 Magpies . . . . . 20, 22, 34, 35, 48  
 Maidenhair fern . . . . . 52, 93  
 Mallee country . . . . . 136, 140  
 Mandarins (fruit) . . . . . 15  
 Manly . . . . . 63, 71, 72, 75, 99  
 — Surf Pavilion . . . . . 72, 141  
 Mannum . . . . . 141  
 Marysville . . . . . 43  
 Mascot airport . . . . . 131  
 Matilda Bay . . . . . 18  
 Melbourne (Victoria), 37, 38, 39-42,  
 43, 46, 49, 51-52, 53, 59, 60, 82,  
 105  
 Melville Water . . . . . 25  
 Memling . . . . . 51  
 Mildura . . . . . 131, 132-134, 137  
 Mimosa, see *Wattle-tree*  
 Minah (bird) . . . . . 48  
 Mineral springs . . . . . 30  
 Mitchell Library . . . . . 65, 83  
 —, Sir Thomas, 50, 108, 142, 144  
 Moonbi Ranges . . . . . 93  
 Moree . . . . . 30-31, 129  
 Morgan . . . . . 131, 132, 134, 141  
 Morgan-Whyalla pipe-line . . . . . 141  
 Mosman (Sydney), 18, 63, 66, 70, 86,  
 88, 102  
 — Children's Library, 86, 88-89, 131  
 Mosman (Western Australia) 16, 18

|                                                                                                                |                          |                                                                        |                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Mosquitoes . . . . .                                                                                           | 85, 86                   | Olympic Pool . . . . .                                                 | 79                 |
| Mossman, Alexander . . . . .                                                                                   | 18                       | Ophir . . . . .                                                        | 109                |
| Mount Buffalo . . . . .                                                                                        | 50                       | Opossums, <i>see Possums</i>                                           |                    |
| — Canoblas . . . . .                                                                                           | 109                      | Orange . . . . .                                                       | 109                |
| — Coo-tha . . . . .                                                                                            | 94                       | Oranges . . . . .                                                      | 15, 32-33, 95, 139 |
| — Eliza . . . . .                                                                                              | 22                       | Orchards, 14, 32-34, 43, 109, 132,<br>135, 139                         |                    |
| — Lofty Ranges . . . . .                                                                                       | 141                      | Orchids . . . . .                                                      | 34                 |
| — Riddell . . . . .                                                                                            | 60                       |                                                                        |                    |
| — St Leonard . . . . .                                                                                         | 60                       |                                                                        |                    |
| — Victoria . . . . .                                                                                           | 108                      |                                                                        |                    |
| — York . . . . .                                                                                               | 108                      |                                                                        |                    |
| Mountains, <i>see Ranges</i>                                                                                   |                          | PAGE, Sir Earle . . . . .                                              | 95                 |
| Mulberries . . . . .                                                                                           | 118                      | Palm Olive Orchestra . . . . .                                         | 82                 |
| Mundaring Weir, 14, 30, 35, 36-37                                                                              |                          | Paper mills . . . . .                                                  | 43                 |
| Muogamarra . . . . .                                                                                           | 131                      | Parks, 14, 16, 20-22, 37, 105, 144                                     |                    |
| Murray gums . . . . .                                                                                          | 135                      | Parrakeets 112, 129, 147-148, 149                                      |                    |
| — pines . . . . .                                                                                              | 135                      | Parramatta . . . . .                                                   | 103, 108, 144      |
| — River, 50, 103, 108, 111, 131, 132,<br>135-136, 139, 142, 143                                                |                          | — River . . . . .                                                      | 73, 144            |
| — — Commission . . . . .                                                                                       | 136                      | Parrots, 25, 35, 48, 95, 147-148, 149                                  |                    |
| Murrumbidgee River, 103, 111, 132,<br>142                                                                      |                          | Passion fruit . . . . .                                                | 121                |
| — whaler . . . . .                                                                                             | 140                      | Pawpaws (fruit) . . . . .                                              | 94                 |
| Murrurundi . . . . .                                                                                           | 129                      | Peaches . . . . .                                                      | 15, 33, 43         |
| Murwillumbah . . . . .                                                                                         | 93                       | Pearling industry . . . . .                                            | 30                 |
| Museums . . . . .                                                                                              | 83, 95                   | Peel River . . . . .                                                   | 93                 |
| Music . . . . .                                                                                                | 64, 78, 81, 89, 101, 131 | Pelicans . . . . .                                                     | 139, 143           |
| Mushrooms . . . . .                                                                                            | 39                       | Pemberton . . . . .                                                    | 14                 |
|                                                                                                                |                          | Pepper-trees . . . . .                                                 | 49, 79, 97         |
| NARRABEEN Lakes . . . . .                                                                                      | 75                       | Perth (Western Australia), 14, 16,<br>23-24, 29, 30, 31-32, 40, 43, 52 |                    |
| Narrabri . . . . .                                                                                             | 130                      | Phillip, Arthur . . . . .                                              | 62                 |
| National Parks . . . . .                                                                                       | 21, 27, 28               | Picnics . . . . .                                                      | 40, 44-47          |
| National Standard Laboratory . . . . .                                                                         | 83                       | Pigeons . . . . .                                                      | 147                |
| — Wavelength . . . . .                                                                                         | 81                       | Pinchgut Island . . . . .                                              | 64                 |
| Native companions (birds) . . . . .                                                                            | 31, 38                   | Pine forest plantation . . . . .                                       | 36                 |
| Nectarines (fruit) . . . . .                                                                                   | 123                      | Pineapples . . . . .                                                   | 95-96              |
| New England Highway . . . . .                                                                                  | 93                       | Pinjarra . . . . .                                                     | 36                 |
| — — Ranges . . . . .                                                                                           | 93, 95                   | Pioneers . . . . .                                                     | 56-57, 95, 108     |
| — South Head Road . . . . .                                                                                    | 104                      | Pitcher-plant . . . . .                                                | 21                 |
| — — Wales, 19, 20, 31, 38, 50, 59,<br>62-94, 97-107, 108-130, 111,<br>127, 129, 132, 135, 136, 142,<br>143-154 |                          | Pittosporum-trees . . . . .                                            | 92, 100            |
| Newcastle . . . . .                                                                                            | 93, 130                  | Platypus . . . . .                                                     | 124                |
| Nicholson Museum . . . . .                                                                                     | 83                       | Port Augusta . . . . .                                                 | 141                |
| No-Go Creek . . . . .                                                                                          | 153                      | — Kembla . . . . .                                                     | 93                 |
| Norfolk Island pines . . . . .                                                                                 | 63, 72                   | — Melbourne . . . . .                                                  | 39                 |
| North Shore School, 67-68, 84-85<br>105                                                                        |                          | — Phillip Bay . . . . .                                                | 39, 49             |
| Northern Territory . . . . .                                                                                   | 59, 108, 130             | — Pirie . . . . .                                                      | 141                |
|                                                                                                                |                          | Portuguese men-o'-war . . . . .                                        | 74-75              |
| OAKLEIGH . . . . .                                                                                             | 51                       | Possums (opossums) . . . . .                                           | 55, 60, 87         |
| Oberon . . . . .                                                                                               | 154                      | Preston, Margaret . . . . .                                            | 51, 132            |
| Olinda . . . . .                                                                                               | 44                       | Psyche Bend . . . . .                                                  | 137                |
|                                                                                                                |                          | Pumping stations . . . . .                                             | 36-37              |
|                                                                                                                |                          | Pyap . . . . .                                                         | 137                |
|                                                                                                                |                          |                                                                        |                    |
|                                                                                                                |                          | QUEENSLAND, 15, 59, 81, 90, 93,<br>94-96, 112, 124, 125, 129, 130      |                    |
|                                                                                                                |                          | Quirindi . . . . .                                                     | 129                |

**RABBITS** . . . 111, 119, 125  
**Rabbit-trappers** . . . 58, 112, 119  
**Railway gauges** . . . 94, 96  
**Ranges of mountains**, 20, 22, 49-50,  
 60, 92, 93, 95, 108, 141, 154  
**Rations** . . . 59, 117, 121, 140  
**Red Cliffs** . . . 135, 137  
**Redlands School** . . . 78, 79, 97  
**Renmark** . . . 135, 139  
**Reserves (wild flower, bush)** 27, 51, 52  
 — (native) . . . 128  
**Riding** . . . 145-147  
**Ring-barking of trees**, 93, 109, 112  
**Riverina** . . . 111  
**Rivers**, 16, 42, 63, 73, 92, 93, 94, 95,  
 103, 108, 109, 111, 123, 131, 144  
**Rosellas (parrakeets)** . . . 112  
**Royal Agricultural Show** . . . 143  
 — Australian Historical Society 83  
 — Yacht Club (Perth) . . . 25, 26  
**Rushcutters' Bay** . . . 62  
  
**ST KILDA ROAD** . . . 42  
 — Vincent's Gulf . . . 38  
**Sanctuaries** . . . 27, 60, 131  
**Sarsaparilla (plant)** . . . 95  
**Sassafras** . . . 44  
**Sassafras-trees** . . . 42  
**Schnapper (fish)** . . . 51-52  
**School buses** . . . 138  
 — orchestras . . . 81  
 — work, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83-86, 91,  
 105, 131, 143  
**Schools**, 14, 36, 60-61, 78, 79, 82,  
 83-84, 95, 97, 144  
**Schools' Broadcasting Music**  
 Sessions . . . 81  
**Selections** . . . 57, 135  
**Seppelt** . . . 141  
**Serpentine Falls** . . . 35-36  
**Settlers, early**, 27, 31, 110, 127, 137,  
 141  
**Shaddocks (fruit)** . . . 33  
**Sharks** . . . 72-74  
**Shearing** . . . 57, 58, 115, 120  
**Sheep**, 30, 38, 53, 57, 109-110,  
 118-120, 121, 122, 126, 127, 135,  
 140, 144  
**Sherbrooke Forest Reservation**  
 . . . 51, 52  
**Shop arcades** . . . 40  
**Sicard, François Leon** . . . 65  
**'Silvertails'** . . . 137

**Singleton** . . . 129  
**Sir Colin Mackenzie Sanctuary**  
 for Australian Flowers and  
 Animals . . . 60  
**Skyscrapers** . . . 23  
**Snowy River** . . . 103, 111  
**South Australia**, 38, 103, 131, 132,  
 134, 135-138, 139-142  
 — Head . . . 103  
**Southern Alps** . . . 20, 50  
**Southport** . . . 93  
**Spiders, trapdoor** . . . 26  
**Spit road** . . . 71  
**Sports**, 50, 60, 76-77, 79, 105-107,  
 117-118, 123, 139, 154  
**Springs** . . . 30, 129  
**Springwood** . . . 108  
**Stations, sheep**, 38, 57, 59, 64, 67,  
 117-122, 123, 128, 129, 135, 154  
**Steel works** . . . 93, 141  
**Stirling Gardens** . . . 24  
 — Highway . . . 18  
 —, Sir James . . . 31  
**Strzlecki Ranges** . . . 49-50  
**Sugar** . . . 15  
 — cane . . . 15, 96  
**Sundowner** . . . 59, 140  
**Sunset Tank** . . . 137  
**Surf Life-Saving Club Associa-**  
**tion** . . . 79  
**Surfing** . . . 63, 66, 72-77, 90, 99  
**Surry Hills** . . . 144  
**Swag** . . . 58, 59  
**Swaggie** . . . 57-59  
**Swan River** . . . 16, 22, 23, 25, 29  
**Swans** . . . 12, 25, 31, 139  
**Swimming**, 37, 60, 67, 72-77, 79,  
 139, 145  
**Sydney (New South Wales)**, 18, 19,  
 21, 38, 39, 62-69, 78-91, 97-107,  
 113, 131, 134, 138, 143

**TAMWORTH** . . . 93, 95  
**Tangerines (fruit)** . . . 15  
**Tanunda** . . . 141  
**Tasmania** . . . 20, 52, 81  
**Tennis**, 79, 86, 116, 117-118, 123, 139  
**Test Matches** . . . 105-107  
**The Overlanders (film)** . . . 130  
**Ti-tree bushes** . . . 144  
**Toowoomba** . . . 81  
**Trapdoor spider** . . . 26  
**Tray-bits (coins)** . . . 68

|                                                                                                                           |                  |                                                    |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tree-ferns . . . . .                                                                                                      | 43, 45, 48       | Waterworks . . . . .                               | 36-37, 141                |
| Trees, 12, 20-21, 27, 28, 29, 33, 36,<br>42, 43, 49, 63, 72, 79, 92, 93, 95,<br>100, 109, 121, 123, 125, 132, 135,<br>143 |                  | Watson's Bay . . . . .                             | 102                       |
| Trigger flowers . . . . .                                                                                                 | 21               | Watsonias (flowers) . . . . .                      | 33                        |
| Trigonometrical station . . . . .                                                                                         | 44               | Wattle-tree (mimosa), 20, 25, 44, 93,<br>132-133   |                           |
| Tuggerah Lakes . . . . .                                                                                                  | 90               | Waxflower (shrub) . . . . .                        | 21                        |
| Twelve Apostle birds . . . . .                                                                                            | 112              | Wentworth House . . . . .                          | 63, 102-104               |
|                                                                                                                           |                  | —, William Charles . . . . .                       | 103, 104, 108             |
| UNIVERSITIES, 18, 19, 20, 39, 81, 83,<br>95, 144                                                                          |                  | West Australian National Park,<br>27, 28-29        |                           |
| Upper Ferntree Gully . . . . .                                                                                            | 51, 52           | Western Australia . . . . .                        | 13-38, 94                 |
| VAN EYCK . . . . .                                                                                                        | 51               | Wheat, 17, 30, 42, 111, 112, 121, 135,<br>137, 140 |                           |
| Vaucluse . . . . .                                                                                                        | 63, 102, 102-104 | Wilga-trees . . . . .                              | 121, 125                  |
| Victoria, 20, 42-61, 94, 103, 125, 128,<br>132-134, 136, 139, 142                                                         |                  | Windsor . . . . .                                  | 104                       |
| Vineyards, 38, 132, 135, 139, 140, 141                                                                                    |                  | Wines . . . . .                                    | 38, 52, 141, 143          |
| WAGTAIL (bird) . . . . .                                                                                                  | 100              | Winter sports . . . . .                            | 50                        |
| Walgett . . . . .                                                                                                         | 129              | Wistaria . . . . .                                 | 104                       |
| Wallabies (animals) . . . . .                                                                                             | 29, 60           | Wollondilly River . . . . .                        | 144                       |
| Wallaroos (animals) . . . . .                                                                                             | 117              | Wolpunda water tower . . . . .                     | 140                       |
| Warrumbungle Range . . . . .                                                                                              | 92               | Wombats (animals) . . . . .                        | 60, 117                   |
| <i>Water into Gold</i> . . . . .                                                                                          | 136              | Wool . . . . .                                     | 17, 42, 60, 118, 120, 137 |
| Waterfalls . . . . .                                                                                                      | 35-36, 53, 95    | Woolloomooloo . . . . .                            | 105                       |
| Water-rat . . . . .                                                                                                       | 123-124          | Wyld, Justice . . . . .                            | 104                       |
|                                                                                                                           |                  | YARRA RIVER . . . . .                              | 42, 50                    |
|                                                                                                                           |                  | ZOO . . . . .                                      | 30, 31                    |

